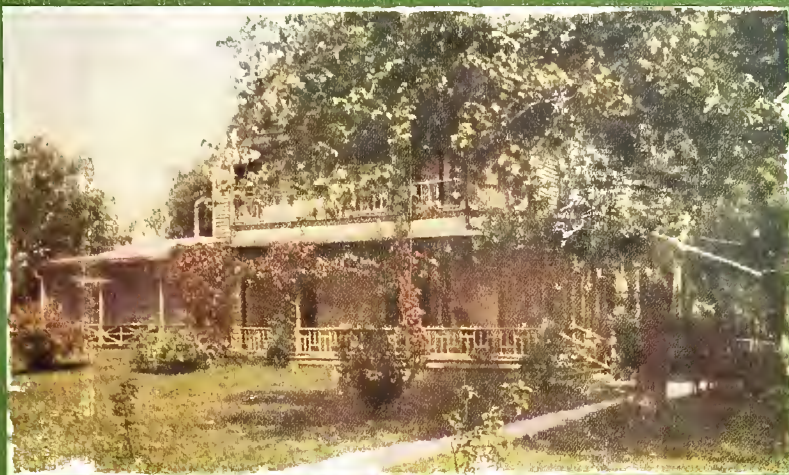
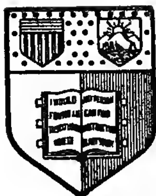


THE MAKING OF A HOME

EBEN E. REXFORD



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The Making of a Home

At the Head of the List I Place Phlox

The Making of a Home

By

EBEN E. REXFORD
Author of "Four Seasons in a Garden," "Amateur Gardencraft," etc.

With illustrations from photographs of actual homes and gardens

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The Making of a Home

CHAPTER I

A CHANCE TO GET A HOME

One Monday morning Jim Hunter, my old room- and class-mate at college, came rushing into the office where I was hard at work trying to "catch up" with the correspondence that had accumulated over Sunday, and the first thing he said, as he banged-to the office door behind him, was —

"Congratulate me, Dave, I've got it at last!"

"Got what?" I exclaimed. "The d. t.'s? You certainly look as if you might have an attack of them." Jim was more excited than I had ever seen him before. Usually he took whatever happened in such a phleg-

matic way that we had come to consider him proof against excitement or enthusiasm of any kind.

"It's the appointment to the position in the Philippines that I've been trying for so long," explained Jim. "I guess you'd be excited if you were in my place. It's been hanging fire so long that I'd almost forgotten I'd ever even made application for it. The notice that at last patience was to receive its due reward came so suddenly that it upset me, so to speak, hence the condition in which I appear before you this morning."

"I didn't know that you'd ever applied for a position of any kind anywhere," I said. "Tell me about it before I commit myself in congratulations."

"It's like this," responded Jim, as he dropped into a chair and elevated his feet on the office table. "I've had an idea, for a long time back, that life in the Philippines and I would agree pretty well. Three years

ago a third or fourth cousin of my mother's sister-in-law's aunt or some equally close relationship went over there and made good by getting a fat position under the government, and one day, more for the fun of the thing than anything else, I wrote to him about getting *me* a position. He wrote back that he'd put my application on file, and if he found an opening for me he'd let me know. That's the last I heard from him until I got the notification that I'd been appointed to some kind of a position that's supposed to pay twenty-five hundred a year. Think of that, Dave!—two—thousand—five—hundred—dollars! Do you get the idea? Great, isn't it? Why—it makes me feel as if I was first cousin to Rockefeller. No wonder I'm excited."

"Good for you, old fellow," I said. "You're in luck, sure enough. How soon do you have to go?"

"Got to be in New York to take a boat

that sails Saturday," answered Jim. "It's mighty sudden, but fortunately it doesn't take much time to arrange my business affairs. That's one of the advantages of having nothing, you see. All I've got to dispose of in this world's goods is an acre lot that lies away out in the country somewhere. One of my aunts left it to me. That's how I came by it. I have an idea that she made me her heir to the lot because she couldn't find anybody that was fool enough to take it off her hands, so in order to leave behind her a reputation for generosity she willed it to me. Don't want to invest in real estate, do you? I've heard you say you meant to have a home in the country some of these days. Here's your chance to get it, and get it cheap."

"What kind of a lot is it?" I asked.

"Blessed if I know," said Jim. "I've never taken interest enough in it to look it over. I'd be glad to sell it for enough to

pay the expenses of my Philippine trip. As usual I'm a little hard up for funds, and if I can't sell the lot I'll have to borrow money enough to get there with, and I don't know whom I'd sooner strike for a loan than you, Dave. It puts you in a kind of between-the-devil-and-the-deep-sea position, you see, but go out and look the land over. There's a trolley-line running past it, so it would be an easy matter for you to get to the city in the morning, and home again at night. If you think you want the lot, after you've looked it over, I'll sell it to you for a song. It'll never be of any use to me."

"You say you're going Thursday?"

"Yep, Thursday night," answered Jim.

"I'll talk with my wife about it," I said, "and let you know what we think about it before you leave."

"All right," said Jim. "Go out and see the place before you conclude to invest. I wouldn't advise you to make the deal after

the fashion in which we used to swap jack-knives when we were boys—unlooked-at, unseen. It may suit *you* to a T, but I'm certain it wouldn't *me*. I was never in love with sylvan woodlands and daisied meadows and all that sort of thing."

"Maybe you would be if you were a family man, and had children that you wanted to have grow up under a better environment than they'll ever get in the city," I said. "The city's a poor place for girls and boys. Then the cost of living is high, and getting higher every year, and the worry of it all is beginning to get on my nerves. Sometimes it seems to me that I'd give anything I had for a breath of pure country air. I'd like a home that is a home in the true sense of the word. When a man lives in a rented house he never feels that the place is a *home*—only a place to stay in temporarily. If the better half thinks favorably of the idea we'll take a run out there and see what the place looks like.

Anyway, I'll let you know what we conclude on Wednesday."

"All right," said Jim. "Hope you'll find it a modern Paradise on a small scale, minus the objectionable features of the original one. I never knew how my late respected aunt came by it, but I suppose some dealer in real estate convinced her that there were great possibilities in the investment. Maybe luck'll make it possible for you to realize some of them. Who knows?"

"Well, come around to tea Wednesday evening, and we'll have an answer ready for you," I said.

"Thanks, I will," said Jim. And away he went, whistling his way down the stairs, too elated over his good fortune to wait for the elevator.

CHAPTER II

A LOOK INTO THE PROMISED LAND

I TALKED the matter over with my wife that night. Both of us had been anxious, for some time back, to have a home of our own. We wanted something permanent—something that *belonged* to us. Until such a time as we owned the roof over our heads we felt unanchored—adrift. I had worked hard since my marriage, and had saved my earnings carefully with a view to owning a home of my own some day. My wife had helped by her economy and prudent management of household affairs to make the sum in the bank larger than it would have been if she had been a "society woman." Many persons would have considered the amount to my credit quite insignificant, but when one has put into it the

earnings of years of hard work and the result of careful management, a comparatively small sum seems quite a little fortune, especially if it is all that stands between one's family and poverty in case of sickness or inability to work. I was drawing an average salary, from which we lived comfortably, and managed to put away a little each month. We looked upon our bank account as a nest-egg from which we hoped some day to realize enough to enable us to afford the home we had in mind.

We knew very well that no matter how hard we worked or how economical we might be, it would be a long, long time before we could hope to own a home in the city, and that of the humblest kind in an undesirable quarter. Such a home we knew we should never be satisfied with, for both of us had a longing for the country, with its green fields, its clean, untainted air, and that peace and quiet that the city-dweller never knows.

There had been with us from the first a dream of such a home, but we had not yet come to the point where we felt like giving the matter serious thought, for the sum we had laid by seemed insufficient to cover the expense of home-building on the basis of city cost. We had gotten into the habit of thinking that we must keep on working and saving for a long time yet before our dream could be realized.

But Jim's offer to sell us his bit of real estate at a figure that would make it an inducement to take it off his hands put the matter before us in such a manner as to demand immediate consideration if we were to take advantage of it. Here was a possible opportunity for us to carry out the plan that had been forming itself slowly in our minds for a long time. What should we do about it?

I asked the question of my wife, and her answer came promptly and decidedly.

"We'll take a look into what may be our Promised Land," she said. "It'll be time enough to decide on what we'll do after we've seen it. We don't want to buy a pig in a poke. When we see the place perhaps we'll agree we wouldn't take it as a gift. But somehow I'm under the impression that I'm going to like it. Maybe that's because it's in the country, and fits in with what we'd like to have happen. If we *do* like it I'm inclined to think that it's the chance of a lifetime. We aren't always going to stay as young as we are now, and the sooner we set about the making of a home, if we're ever to have one of our own, the better. Such a home as we have in mind isn't the work of a year or two. It will need time for it to grow and develop, as a tree does."

"That's the idea, exactly," I said. "We don't want to buy a house that some one else has built. We want something that will express ourselves—we'll build into the place

something of our personality. Why, half the pleasure of home-making consists in the development of the idea—its growth from the seed-thought of home as the best place on earth."

You see, we were inclined to be rather sentimental over our suddenly-aroused interest in home-making. The truth was, while seemingly dormant in the mind of each of us, the idea had, unconsciously to us, been growing all along. All that was needed to bring it into immediate consideration was such an opportunity as now presented itself. It really seemed as if we had been all the time working toward this crucial period, though we had said but little about it to each other, and had been waiting for the moment that had arrived sooner than we had expected. The case called for prompt action, and when I explained to my employer why I wanted Tuesday afternoon off, he kindly consented to give me the half holiday.

It was a delightful afternoon in June when my wife and I, with our two boys, set off on our home-seeking trip. As we left the hot and dusty city behind, our spirits rose in proportion to our distance from it. Especially were the children delighted, as they had never been in the real country before. A twenty-mile trip over a trolley-line isn't much of a journey into the world, and it seemed to us that it came to an end almost as soon as it had begun. But, short as it was, it afforded us pleasant glimpses of green meadows and fields of grain that gave promise of generous harvest, with little homes scattered all along the way, and the fact that we were on a home-quest seemed to put us in touch with the dwellers in them.

The trolley-car stopped at a little station called Brookvale, the end of our journey. There was no village, simply a huddle of buildings consisting of a store, a church, a schoolhouse, a blacksmith shop, and a few

houses. Evidently the land had been plotted into lots years ago by some one who expected that a village would speedily develop on the site, for here and there we saw stakes that had been set to mark the corners of the lots that were still waiting for buyers.

Jim had furnished me with the information necessary to locate his particular bit of property, and we had little difficulty in finding it.

It was a "lot"—simply that and nothing more. There was only one specially attractive feature about it, and that was a majestic old elm.

"Oh, Dave," cried my wife, "did you ever see such a magnificent tree? It seems stretching out its branches in welcome to whoever builds a home under it. The lot's worth owning for that if for nothing else."

"We can hardly afford to invest our bank account in a tree," I said, "unless we want to go back to the primitive and give up the

modern idea of a roof over our heads. Let's look about us."

We *did* look about. I satisfied myself that the soil of the lot was good; that it had excellent natural drainage; and that, though it was pretty nearly covered with a luxuriant growth of bushes, it could be cleared without a great deal of trouble or expense. I had always thought of the home I hoped to own some day as being located on a hill, with a broad outlook upon the world in all directions. But the only hill in sight was one immediately back of Jim's lot, and that was not a large one. Still, it was a hill, and to the dweller in the city where everything seems on a dead level it had an entrancing look that made me wish it was part of the lot we had come to see. I am confident that then and there I determined some day to be its owner, if we came to the country to live, though I hardly realized what was passing through my mind at the time, be-

cause there was so much else to think of just then.

Jim's lot sloped gently toward the road that ran past it, and the old elm that my wife had fallen in love with at first sight crowned the crest of a little knoll that nature seemed to have intended for a building-site. Across one corner of the lot ran a little stream that had doubtless given the neighborhood its name, since there did not seem to be a creek or other stream of any importance anywhere about. Here and there across outlying fields pleasant homes could be seen, nearly all of them new ones, but none of them pretentious. Other home-seekers with small bank accounts had evidently learned the desirability of Brookvale in advance of us.

"Well," I said, by and by, "what do you think of it?"

"I'd think the world of it—if it were ours," my wife answered.

"Could you be contented here, do you think?" I asked. "It would be so different from the city that you'd imagine it Sunday all the week. Don't you think you'd get lonesome? Wouldn't the quiet become monotonous after a little?"

"Try me and see," she answered. "There's room to live and breathe here without feeling that possibly you're infringing on some one else's right to do so. There's something to see besides high walls and grimy roofs. It would be as if one had a private park that came right up to the door, and one wouldn't be stared at by 'keep off the grass' signs at every turn. I'd be contented because—*it would be home.*" And when my wife said that there was a look in her face that told me more plainly than words what the decision would be if left to her.

That settled it. In fact, it was all that I was waiting for before making my own decision. The place and its possibilities had

appealed to me from the first. True, it lacked many of the features that had made our dream-home attractive, but I had had enough experience in the world to know that the things we dream of are seldom realized in the things that are. And I had also learned that lesson of wisdom which consists in being satisfied with the things we can afford rather than frittering away time and happiness in vain longings for the things that are out of reach. Better be satisfied with a crust, and get all possible good out of it, than starve ourselves in a vain desire for the luxuries we cannot have.

CHAPTER III

WE INVEST IN REAL ESTATE

So it happened that when Jim came to take tea with us Wednesday night the bargain was closed, and we became the owners of a home that was to be.

It had all occurred so suddenly that neither my wife nor I could fully realize the importance of the step we had taken. It seemed at first simply another phase of our home-dream. But by and by we began to settle down to the fact that the dream we had cherished so long was in a fair way of being realized. Then the making of plans began.

"I don't want a great, large house," said Mary, very positively.

"It's lucky that you don't," said I, "for we couldn't afford it if you did. We've got to keep within our means. We're not going

into debt for anything. If we can't have what we'd like without 'getting trusted' for it, we'll go without it."

"That's my opinion, exactly," responded Mary. "The man who is in debt isn't his own master. I couldn't enjoy anything that wasn't paid for. It wouldn't seem really mine until the last payment was made on it. But about the house: I don't want a parlor. I want something that we can make use of every day. What's good enough for us is quite good enough for those who come to visit us. You see, I go on the home-first-and-the-world-afterward idea. A parlor involves a good deal of unnecessary expense because it's such a useless thing in itself. It costs more to make and to furnish than any other part of a house; and when it's done, nine times out of ten, we shut it up, so what good do we get out of it? The work that's required in taking care of it might better be put on other things."

"Right again," I answered. "You're a woman after my own heart."

"And I don't want a house," Mary continued, "with gimcracks and flummididdles plastered all over it, inside and out, but just a plain, honest house that one can feel on friendly terms with. I've seen houses that had a faculty of making the people who were unfortunate enough to be obliged to live in them feel, all the time, as if they were company. It was impossible to get intimate with them. The house I want isn't going to be built for show, but for use and comfort, and there's going to be a reason for every room in it. And it isn't going to be built after anybody's plan but our own. It's always seemed to me that in building a house—a home—the first consideration should be convenience, and the second economy of cost, or anyway keeping within the limit that one can well afford. The beautifying of it is a matter that must come with

time. The real beauty of a home comes from working into it the beauty of the home-life that goes on under its roof. It isn't so much a matter of fashioning or of furnishing as of giving expression in a thousand simple ways to the home-spirit that makes its dwelling there. There are little touches that grow out of our love for the place, and our desire to make it so pleasant that the children reared in it can never forget it, and never grow away from its influence when they go out to take up the work of life elsewhere."

Is there anything more delightful, I wonder, than the planning of a home? If there is, it must be the planning of the garden and grounds about it. I am inclined to think that one is the complement of the other. Mary and I made plans without number before we decided on the one from which our house was to be built. One would suggest this and the other that, and out of this partnership in plan-making was at last evolved

the pattern for the house which seemed best adapted to our needs—and our means.

I had engaged men to clear the lot as soon as it came into my possession, and by the time the plan for the house had been decided on the place presented a very different appearance from that shown at the time of our first visit to it. It was not as attractive, in a way, after the loss of its bushes as it had been before, but the bareness which followed the application of the axe and bush-scythe revealed more clearly its possibilities. It enabled one to get in closer touch with the soil.

The building of the house was let to a contractor who agreed to have it ready for occupancy by the time my lease of the house we occupied expired. He lived up to his agreement, and early in October we began life under our own vine and fig-tree.

Our own home!

The words are simple ones, but the wealth

of meaning in them can never be fully understood by those who have not been through an experience similar to ours. Whoever owns a home that he has not put a good deal of himself into has lost more than he can realize, for the home that another has planned lacks the sense of individuality which is *our* home's first and greatest charm. Every little thing about it means something to us that others cannot understand, and which we cannot explain to them because it is impossible for them to see things through our personality.

I shall never forget that first evening in the new home. We had kindled a fire on the hearth—Mary had all along contended that a fireplace was the very heart of home, and that we could not afford to be without one—and as we drew about it, and felt the warmth from it stealing over us as if it were giving us greeting and pledging friendship, and watched the light and shadow flickering

through the room from the flame at the heart of an old oak that some tempest had felled to earth long ago, and heard the crisp, crackling sounds that the children declared were made by firecrackers touched off by the sprites that had their dwelling in the nooks and corners of the hearth, we had little to say.

There was much to feel, however, and often the felt but unspoken word is more eloquent than the spoken one. In the silence that was about us we dedicated the place to the home-spirit whose name is Love. I remember that my hand reached out and found the hand of Mary, and that at the touch her eyes met mine with a look in them that was misty with tears. Then, all of a sudden, she caught her boys in her arms and kissed them, and in that caress the rite of dedication was made complete, and home was made Home in the truest meaning of the term.

CHAPTER IV

PLANNING THINGS

As may be imagined, the new home was sadly lacking in attractive surroundings at first. There had been no attempt at beautifying the place while the builders were at work. When the house was turned over to us as completed the yard about it was in most unsightly condition. The heaps of earth that had been thrown out in making the excavation for the basement made the place look as if a small earthquake had occurred. Odds and ends of lumber were scattered all over it. In short, the scene was one of chaos from which it seemed it would be difficult to evolve order.

As I looked it over, however, and saw what must be done to bring about the improvements I had in mind, I felt a thrill of

delightful anticipation, for from boyhood I had been in love with the soil. More than once I had told myself that a great mistake had been made when I accepted a position in a city office. Nature had intended to make a farmer out of me. Here, at last, was the opportunity to correct, in some degree at least, the mistake that had been made. If I could not be a full-fledged farmer I could dig and delve in the little piece of ground of which I was owner, and that would be farming on a small scale.

It was too late in the season to do much in the way of improvement before cold weather came. But the boys and I cleared away the rubbish left by the carpenters, and jolly sport it was to pile it in heaps and burn it. I really think I got more pleasure out of it than the boys did. Of course there was little time in which to do this work, after my day in the city, but by working at it until bedtime I succeeded in accomplishing a good

deal before winter set in. Before the first snow fell I had leveled the heaps of earth from the cellar, and reduced the surface of the lot to a degree of evenness. I found that there was enough of this excavated soil to make it possible to arrange for a gentle slope in all directions from the house, for a lawn that has a slope in it is always more pleasing than a level one.

One of our neighbors happened along while I was at work on the stiff, heavy soil with a rather dull hoe and an iron-toothed rake.

"Going in for a lawn, are you?" he asked, as he paused to watch me at my work. "That's just what I set out to do when I came here. I thought it must be the easiest thing in the world—just rake the ground over, scatter some seed on it, and that was all there was to it. But I soon found out my mistake. I had to make three tries at it before I got a lawn that was worth the name."

"Maybe you wouldn't object to telling me what has to be done in order to get a good lawn," I said. "You see, I'm a green hand at the work. If I could profit by your experience it might save me a good deal of hard labor, and probably a big disappointment in the end."

"If I can give you any pointers that'll help you out, I'll be glad to do so," said my neighbor. "I guess you're in about the same boat that I was when I came here to live. I didn't know even the A B C's of farming, so I had to begin at the bottom and work up. I've learned a good many things since then, and I'm learning more and more all the time, and I've about come to the conclusion that one keeps on learning as long as he lives. That's one of the delightful things about country life."

"Have you lived here long?" I asked.

"Moved here about six years ago," was the reply. "Came here to die, everybody

told me. But the way it's turned out I came here to live. I don't look like a dead man, do I?"

I looked my neighbor over critically, and had to admit that he didn't have much of the appearance of a corpse. His face was tanned, but a fresh red showed through the brown. His muscles gave indication of an ability to do a good day's work. I liked the shrewd twinkle in his eye.

"Now, about the making of your lawn," he said. "You won't get much of a crop of grass if you don't put considerable mellow soil on top of that clay. Grass is supposed to live and flourish under all circumstances and conditions, but the fact is it's a rather tender plant when it's young. You've got to give it a chance to spread its first roots in a soil that's light and easy for them to take hold of. What you need is a top-dressing of earth from hollows where leaves have been rotting for nobody knows how long. Spread

three or four inches of that over the clay before you sow any seed on it. By and by, when the grass plants get older and stronger, their roots will strike down into the clay that underlies the lighter soil, and you'll have a lawn to be proud of. But don't use barn-yard fertilizer on it unless you are fond of pulling weeds, and can give all your time to it every summer. Manure from the barn-yard is an ideal fertilizer for any crop that you set out in rows or beds, but it isn't the thing for the yard where the hoe can't be used. It's full of all kinds of weed-seeds, and if you get your lawn seeded with weeds to begin with you've got a life-job on your hands in trying to get rid of them. They'll come out ahead in spite of your pulling and digging. Chemical manures are what are needed in lawn-making."

My neighbor also gave me some valuable advice about the tools I needed in order to do effective work.

"I notice that you've got the kind of hoe that most persons use simply because their folks used it before them," he said. "Now, what you ought to have is a hoe shaped like the letter V, with the point in front. If you keep it sharp it'll work a great deal easier than the old, square-bladed one. When you get used to it, you can pick off weeds close to your plants without any danger of cutting them off as you're likely to do with a square-bladed hoe. I wouldn't swap my pointed hoe for a score of the old kind. Use one for a week and you'll never go back to the square one. And don't take any stock in iron rakes. They're all right, at first, but it won't be long before their teeth are bent into all kinds of shapes, and you can't straighten them without breaking them. Get a steel rake. It'll cost you more than an iron one, but you'll find it cheaper in the end. And you need a good, stout wheelbarrow. You'll find use for it every day; and when you

aren't using it the children'll be ready to take possession of it," and my neighbor grinned as he saw four-year-old Tom attempting to make a horse out of the rake by straddling its handle.

I profited by my new friend's advice, and found out that he knew whereof he spoke. The V-shaped hoe is not only a labor-saver, but it enables one to do better work than it is possible to do with the ordinary hoe. And as to the superiority of the steel rake over the iron one, there can be no question with the man who has used both.

Some of my readers may think that living twenty miles away from one's daily work must make life decidedly unpleasant in more ways than one. But I did not find it so. The early morning ride to the city seemed to put me into good condition for the work of the day. The ride homeward, after the day's work was done, was always full of delightful anticipations. There was the welcome that

was waiting for me to look forward to, and there was the long evening ahead, with my wife at my side and my boys on the hearth or my lap, and a good book or the daily paper at hand to be looked into "between times."

A happier winter than my first one in the country I have never known. Was I not in my own home, with the best company in the world to make the time pass pleasantly? Often I thought, as I sat before my hearth-fire, of those at the office whose so-called homes were in the rushing, roaring, ever-restless city. I wished that they could get a glimpse of my little family circle, and the hearth on which we burned daily incense to the Spirit of the Home. Could they do so I felt sure that some of them would do as I had done.

CHAPTER V

PUZZLING OVER THE CATALOGUES

In the long winter evenings, after the children had been tucked in bed, Mary and I studied the catalogues of the seed-growers and the plant-men. And a fascinating study it was, as every lover of flowers can testify.

We had decided on having a real flower garden—a garden of annuals. We would plant the shrubs and perennials on the lawn. The annuals would furnish us with flowers the first season while the others were establishing themselves for future work.

We began by marking each plant in the catalogue whose description pleased us. When we had gone through it and looked over the list we had made we found, to our dismay, that we had chosen more than our

entire lot would accommodate. This obliged us to make a new list, selecting only such kinds as seemed the very cream of the entire collection. This revised and condensed list proved to be wholly out of proportion to the amount of space we proposed to devote to flowers. It was not until the fifth or sixth revision had been made that we felt justified in sending off our order to the seedsman.

"I did want the others so much," Mary said, after the letter had gone. "I just know they must be beautiful from the descriptions of them." That was before we had learned that the seedsmen always use adjectives of the superlative degree in describing the things they have to sell.

It was the same with shrubs and perennials. We were inclined to select those which were most attractively described because neither of us was familiar enough with plants to feel safe in trusting to our own judgment.

"Maybe our neighbor could help us," I

suggested. "He seems to have solved a good many of the problems that confront the beginner in country life. I'll ask him."

I did so. But he frankly admitted that he wasn't "up in the posy-business." He knew how to make things grow in the field and the vegetable garden, but he had not had much experience in flower-growing. He could tell us who had, however. There was an old lady living a short distance away who had the "knack," all her neighbors said, of making a broomstick take root and flourish if she stuck the end of it into the soil. We'd do well to consult her.

So one Sunday afternoon Mary and I went out for a stroll, and we took the road leading past this old lady's house. Being winter, there was nothing to be seen in her little front yard except bare shrubs, but we paused by the fence to admire the arrangement and the healthy appearance of them. While we were thus engaged, the owner of them came

to the door, and asked if we wouldn't come in.

"I know who you are," she said. "Mr. Hayes told me about you, and how he'd advised you to come over and have a talk with me about plants. Don't stand on ceremony and wait for me to come over and make a call before we strike up an acquaintance. You'll find out, if you stay here, that we don't take much stock in the city ways of doing things. Come right in, and tell me all you want to find out about. If there's one thing I love it's talking about flowers. Husband says he gets tired of listening to me when I once get started, but I don't mind what *he* says, for he likes flowers almost as well as I do. He *had* to, to keep peace in the family," and the dear old lady laughed in such a cheery way that our hearts warmed to her at once.

We accepted her invitation to come in, and in less than ten minutes we were as well

acquainted with each other as if we had lived in the same neighborhood half a lifetime. That's what a mutual love for flowers will do in making friendships.

"Don't go in for the newfangled things," the old lady told us. "Most of them aren't worth planting, though they cost a good deal more than the old standbys do. Some folks will buy them just because they *are* new, and they want something that their neighbors haven't got, but they soon find out that the good old-fashioned kinds are the ones to be depended on. What you want is a plant that is hardy enough to stand our hard winters, and that will never disappoint you. And we've lots of such plants. There's the peony, and the hollyhock, and the phlox, and the larkspur, and daisies, and irises, and ever so many more. They don't require much care—in fact they'll almost take care of themselves if you'll keep the grass and weeds from choking them, and

give them some kind of fertilizer once a year. It's the same with shrubs. There are lilacs, and roses, and spireas, and flowering-currants, and snowballs, and almonds—more than there's room for in most front yards—all easy to take care of and every one of them so beautiful that you never can make up your mind which you like best." She paused to beam on us happily; then suddenly continued:

"I tell you what! There are lots of young plants growing in my garden that I'd be glad to give you next spring. I have to dig up a good many every year, to prevent the garden from being turned into a thicket, and I never throw one of them away if I can help it. Husband says I go the rounds of the neighborhood every season, begging the people to do me the favor of taking some of my plants. Any one's welcome to them who loves flowers."

"We shall remember that when spring

comes," said Mary, and after a hearty good-bye we left the old lady.

The seeds we had ordered came a few days after this visit.

"Don't they look nice?" exclaimed Mary, handling the little brown packages as tenderly as some women handle a baby. "Just think what's in them! Flowers for all summer long, and smells that will make the garden sweet day and night, and ——"

"Any amount of hard work in making beds for them and pulling weeds," I said, breaking in cruelly on her sentimental rhapsody.

"Yes, that, of course," she admitted. "But what's anything worth if one doesn't have to work for it? I don't think I'd care half as much for them if they didn't cost something in the way of work and care."

Every little while Neighbor Hayes came in to sit for an hour or two, and from him

I learned many things that it would have taken a long time to learn from personal experience.

Among other things I learned that every garden-maker needs a weeding-hook, a garden cultivator, and a trowel to use in transplanting seedlings.

"A weeding-hook looks like such an insignificant tool that most persons have an idea it isn't of any practical value," he said. "But when you've given it a good trial you'll change your mind about it. You can do more weeding with it in half an hour than you can do in a day by hand, and when you get through you'll find that the work's better done than hand-weeding, and has been accomplished so easily that you haven't minded it. The hook saves your fingers and your patience, and it leaves the ground in just the proper shape for making things grow—as a corn-field is after you've been over it with a cultivator.

"Maybe not all of the seed you sow will germinate," he continued. "This will make it necessary to set out plants to fill the empty places, and that's where the trowel will come into play. Just run it down into the earth by the side of the plant you want to move, bear down on the handle, and up will come the plant with earth adhering to its roots, and it won't seem to know that anything's happened to it. That's one of the important secrets of transplanting seedlings successfully—and plants of all kinds, for that matter—not to disturb their roots. If the weather's dry, water the plants that are to be transplanted an hour before you are ready to move them. That will make the soil about their roots so firm that it will hold together when you lift them. If you do that it will seldom be necessary to water them after they're put into the ground where they are to stay. It's watering them in advance, as you might say."

Of course we meant to have a vegetable garden, and here was where the garden cultivator would prove indispensable, our friend told us.

"If you plant most of your vegetables in rows so that you can use the cultivator to the best advantage, it will make the work of keeping the garden clean so easy that you won't mind it in the least. That oldest boy of yours could run it, and think it nothing but fun. It will tear up the weeds and make the soil light and mellow, and if a dry spell comes, and you keep using it right along, there will be no need of watering the garden, for the ground will be in shape to take in all the moisture there is in dews and little showers. You see, some of those persons who don't take the trouble to study into matters have an idea that it will be death to the plants if you stir the soil they are growing in in a dry spell. That's where they make a big mistake. If the ground is allowed to

crust over it is not in a condition to absorb moisture, and the soil under the crust gets drier and drier. But if you don't let any crust form by keeping the cultivator going, the ground'll act like a sponge, and take in whatever moisture there is in the atmosphere. That's why we farmers keep the cultivator going day after day in our cornfields in dry weather. And a garden is really a field on a small scale."

He also gave me some good advice on the selection of seed for the vegetable garden.

"Get the best there is," he said. "It'll cost you a little more, perhaps, but it's well worth all the extra money you put into it."

"But how am I to know which *is* the best?" I asked. "If I were to be governed by what the seedsmen say in their catalogues, I'd believe that all of them have 'the best.'"

"The proper thing to do," answered Neighbor Hayes, "is to buy your seed of some firm that's got a reputation it's obliged

to live up to. There are those which have been in the seed-business almost a lifetime, and they stay in business because they have won the confidence of their customers to such an extent that they never lose any of them. They've the name of doing a fair, square business, and they can't afford to do anything else. Some of the new concerns may sell just as good seed, and be just as honest, but we don't *know* that yet, so it's well to stay with those that we *do* know about."

CHAPTER VI

LAWN-MAKING

THE first thing that I set about doing when spring came was the making of the lawn. My neighbor had told me that if I wanted a lawn that would "look like something" the first season I would do well to begin the work as soon as the frost was out of the ground.

"Spring, early spring, is the time for sowing grass," he said. "If you want it to catch well you must sow it before hot weather comes. Its roots must have a chance to get a hold in the soil while the weather is cool, and the ground has a good deal of moisture in it.

"And another thing," he went on to say, "must be done if you want your lawn to have the look of an old lawn while it is in

the early stages of its development. And that is, sow as much seed again as they tell you to. Thick seeding will give a stand of grass that makes it look like old sward before hot weather sets in. Thin seeding won't amount to much the first season. And don't be satisfied with any kind of seed that's on the market that's said to be just as good as expensive seed. Get the best there is, and to make sure of getting it buy of the old, reliable firms who don't bid for patronage by claiming that they are underselling their competitors but are giving you just as good an article as you can get anywhere. And don't go in for high manuring to begin with. If you spread three or four inches of leaf-soil from the woods over the clay it'll give you a soil that's quite rich enough to start with. Next year you can safely give a fertilizer, for the roots of the grass will be strong enough then to stand richer food. There's such a thing as overdoing matters in

using strong manures on young and tender plants. It's a good deal like feeding babies with food their little stomachs haven't the strength to digest."

The first thing I did on the lawn was to make its surface as smooth as possible. There were hollows to fill, and knolls to cut down. The soil from the hillocks went to fill the depressions.

"You will have to pound the loose soil down well when you dump it into the hollows," cautioned my neighbor. "If you don't do that it's bound to settle, and you'll have a yard that'll look as if there had at some time been waves in the soil that 'had set,' as old Deacon Jones expressed it when he criticized my first attempt at lawn-making. I had to admit that the old gentleman's idea was a very pertinent one, for the surface of the ground was billowy in the extreme, all because I had dumped soil loosely into the hollows and made no attempt to

make it as firm and compact as the soil about it. What you need is a tool that we call a 'pounder,'—a heavy iron attached to an upright handle, with which the loose soil can be made as firm as that beneath it. You'll probably find it rather hard work to operate it, but it'll settle the soil and give you excellent muscular exercise."

As my neighbor intimated, the use of a pounder calls for some decidedly strenuous work on the part of the operator, but it is work that counts in lawn-making. The thorough use of it will prevent the soil from showing that uneven surface which detracts so much from the general effect that we aim at.

After I had put in a week's work of such time as I had at my command on it, the ground looked to me as if it was in the right condition to receive the top-dressing Hayes had advised. I hired a man to draw some of the rich earth from the rear of the lot and

spread it over the clay sub-soil. This I raked over and over until there wasn't a lump left in it, and it was of an even depth in all parts of the yard. Then I was ready for seed-sowing.

Acting on the advice of one of my neighbors who had quite a local reputation as a successful "seeder," I chose a damp, still day for seeding my lawn. I went over the ground from east to west, scattering the seed as evenly as possible. But it was so light that the least gust of wind would blow it here and there, as it left my hand. Fearful of its being an uneven "catch" I went over it again—this time from north to south. Then—this was on the strength of my neighbor's advice also—I ran an improvised roller over the ground to press the seed into the soft soil to prevent its being blown away, and to make the soil compact enough to retain sufficient moisture to assist in germination.

In a week there was a thin film of green

on our lawn. In a fortnight the young grass-blades were an inch tall, and in a month's time from sowing Mary said that our lawn looked more as a lawn ought to look, allowing her to be judge, than dozens of old lawns she had seen.

My first experience at lawn-making was a success in all senses of the word. The expense of it, leaving my own work out of the account, was slight. If I had hired a professional gardener, it would have cost a tidy little sum, for he would doubtless have insisted on tiling it for drainage, have gone to the expense of grading, and have done various other things that I have come to consider wholly unnecessary in the making of a small lawn. The man who undertakes to develop his own home can well afford to dispense with the services of a professional if he goes at the work intelligently, as I was enabled to do by acting on the advice of neighbors who "knew whereof they spoke."

Later on I learned how to care for the lawn we were so proud of. I bought a lawn-mower—not one of the little, cheap things that make a noise like a small sawmill, and soon wear out, but one that I was assured would last a lifetime if properly cared for,—and the dealer I bought it of showed me how to set its blades so that they would clip off the upper half of the grass-leaves only.

"You don't want to *shave* your lawn," he said. "You should simply *shear* it, if you want it to give you the greatest amount of pleasure. If you set the mower so that the ground looks as if it had been gone over with a barber's clippers you cannot help injuring the roots of the grass close to the surface, and if you do that you'll never have a fine sward. But if you clip it an inch and a half above its crown your lawn will have that velvety look that is the chief charm of any lawn, great or small."

In ordinary weather I mowed my lawn

twice a week, leaving the clippings where they fell, to decay and add whatever fertilizing elements were in them to the soil. In dry weather I mowed it once a week. I was careful to keep the mower-knives sharp that the grass might be cut cleanly and evenly. With a dull mower the lawn will have a haggled appearance that makes it unsightly. I also kept the mower well oiled to make the operation of it as easy as possible. When it was not in use, I stored it under cover. I learned, during this home-making period of my life, that if one's tools are properly cared for they will last at least three times as long as those which are neglected. There should always be a place in which to put away all kinds of garden utensils. Make it a rule to return to this place whatever tool you use as soon as you are done with it. If this rule is lived up to you will always know just where to find what you want, and you will have the satisfaction of feeling that you are

treating tool-friends well in return for the good service they have rendered you.

If a lawn is raked, it should never be done with the ordinary iron-toothed rake, for it will tear the surface in spite of your efforts to prevent it, and loosen the roots of the grass in such a manner as to do more or less injury. The only rake I would recommend for this purpose has wire teeth, and these are so shaped that they cannot enter the sward. An ordinary wooden hay-rake answers the purpose quite well, but its teeth are so long that they are likely to get such a grip on the soil that the use of it becomes tiresome. As I have already intimated, I do not rake my lawn after mowing. I prefer to let the clippings settle into the grass and become a fertilizing factor as they decay. True, they will show a little, immediately after mowing, but if the lawn-mower is used twice a week, regularly, they will be too short to be particularly noticeable, and before the end of the

first day they will have wilted and sunk out of sight. If one objects to this disposition of the clippings he can attach a basket to this mower at slight expense, into which the machine will throw the grass as it cuts it. In this way mowing and raking become one operation. But it will be necessary to empty the basket so frequently that I have never felt inclined to adopt this method. One cannot do expeditious work when a basket is used, except on very small lawns.

In order to get the maximum of pleasure from a lawn it must be kept free from refuse of all kinds, and this can be done only by giving it careful and regular attention. A slovenly-cared-for lawn is not only an eyesore to the lover of neatness, but a reproach to the owner whose neglect allows it to become unsightly. Neatness must characterize everything about the home, outside as well as in, if we would make it the pleasant place every home ought to be.

CHAPTER VII

GARDEN-MAKING

FOLLOWING close on the heels of lawn-making came the making of the vegetable and flower gardens.

Mary was as much interested in this work as I was. I soon discovered that while I was at work over the ledger in the city office she was quite as busy in the garden, digging and delving, and gaining health that brought a new color into her cheeks and gave her face a coat of tan that was far more becoming, from my standpoint, than beauty-powder and rouge.

And our boys were as interested as we were. I cannot truthfully say that their efforts always resulted in direct benefit, so far as the making of the garden was concerned; but

we thoroughly enjoyed their companionship at all times, and encouraged them to believe that they were doing commendable things, because we felt that outdoor life was the tonic they needed most of all. So we gave them credit for the best intentions, and urged them to keep on trying by giving them to understand that their motives were properly appreciated, if the results of them were not all that might be desired.

But I must do them the justice to say that it was really surprising to see what they accomplished at times. A child likes to do what older persons do; or at least to *try* to do it, and it often happens that he succeeds in a manner that seems quite remarkable, considering age and lack of experience. Give a child due praise for all he *tries* to do, even if his efforts fall short of success, and you will be surprised at the development that takes place. Too often we fail to give a child credit for his efforts and do not properly ap-

preciate his desire to do helpful things. As my boys grew up, they became good gardeners without knowing when their knowledge was acquired. They simply *grew into it* by easy stages. It was a process of natural development. I would urge every parent who is fortunate enough to have a garden to make it a place in which to teach his children some of the most helpful primary lessons of life. What is learned in the garden will be of benefit in other fields of life-work.

Here, as in so many other instances, I drew freely on the experiences of my friend Hayes. I made a good many mistakes, as it was, but I would have made a good many more if I had not followed the practical advice he was ever ready to give. Suffice it to say that I learned many things that every gardener *must* learn, sooner or later, in order to attain success, and some of these I will set down, here and elsewhere, for the benefit of other beginners.

Sometimes the amateur gardener seems to think that about all he has to do to grow flowers and vegetables is to scratch the surface of the soil a little, scatter seed over it, and leave Nature to do the rest. This is where so many make a serious mistake. Good plants can only be grown in a well-prepared soil. The ground must be made mellow, that the roots of young and tender plants may be able to spread freely in it. In nearly every case some kind of fertilizer must be used. Few soils are rich enough in themselves to grow plants of any kind—except weeds—to perfection. Because a weed will flourish luxuriantly in ordinary soil it does not follow that the plants we undertake to grow in the vegetable or flower garden will do so. A quick, vigorous growth is necessary in order to attain to the highest degree of success, and this can be secured only through thorough cultivation and a generous supply of plant-food.

Right here I want to say that there are fertilizers on the market that are specially adapted to nearly all kinds of soil, but in order to make sure that you are getting just the kind you need, it is advisable to consult some one who understands local soil-conditions before investing. Unless you do this you are taking chances on getting or not getting the kind that your particular soil requires, and this you cannot afford to do. There are persons in all communities who will be able, from personal experience, to tell you what kind is best suited to your needs, and I should advise you not to make a purchase until asking their advice. Knowing the quality and the peculiarities of the soil, they will be able to give you just the information which you need.

A mistake is frequently made in attempting more than can be carried through successfully. It is not always, or often, that the large garden proves most satisfactory or most

profitable. A small garden, well cared for, is pretty sure to yield the best returns. Concentrated labor seldom fails to give better results than the same amount of attention spread over a large surface. This not only in quantity, but in quality as well. For the plant that is given all the care it requires is sure to have a greater delicacy of flavor than the one that is not encouraged to do its best by making it easy for it to concentrate all its energies on development instead of being obliged to expend some of them in its efforts to overcome difficulties.

Another mistake—and a most serious one—is made in using inferior seed because it costs less than the superior article. Cheap seed *is* cheap in all senses of the term—cheap in quality as well as price. It's like the scrub cow as compared with the pedigreed animal. We cannot expect to grow a fine flower or vegetable from seed that has not had bred into it the qualities that go to

make fine flowers and vegetables. It has taken years of high culture and judicious selection for our leading seedsmen to produce the varieties that give the highest degree of satisfaction, and it stands to reason that since like begets like, high-bred seed must be used if we want best results. A superior quality in the plants we grow is not a mere matter of luck and chance, as so many seem to think. In the seed itself is the possibility of the highest degree of success.

Another mistake—often a costly one—is made in our desire to "get the start of the season," as we say, a term which, being liberally interpreted, means getting the start of our neighbors. We let our enthusiasm get the better of our good judgment, and put seed into the ground before it is in condition to perform its part in the process of germination. Sometimes the seed germinates, but often under such depressing con-

ditions that the seedling gets so weak a start that it struggles on between life and death until the weather becomes warm, and this finds it in such a low state of vitality that plants from seed not sown until the ground has become warm and the weather favorable almost invariably come out ahead. Keep in mind the fact that nothing is gained, and often all is lost, by being in too great a hurry to "make garden." Wait until you are reasonably sure that the ground is in proper condition before putting any seed into it; also that the weather has become settled, and is likely to stay so. When the surplus water from spring rains has drained out of the soil, leaving it light and mellow, and the danger of late frosts is over, is the time to plant your garden.

We often delay the beginning of weed-pulling, waiting, we tell ourselves, for the plants to "get a good start," ignoring the fact that the weeds are also getting a good

start. Our plants have got their "start" as soon as they germinate, and right then and there is the time to begin giving them the care they need. Allow no weed to share with them, while in the earlier stages of growth, the nourishment that is in the soil, and which should be kept for their use alone. Never lose sight of the fact that there can be no compromise between weeds and garden plants. The weeds will have everything their own way if their presence is tolerated, therefore wage war against them from the very beginning, and let the fight be one to the finish.

If the season happens to be a dry one we often fail to supply our plants with the moisture needed at their roots at the time when it is needed most, because we wait to see if it isn't going to rain. By waiting for the rain that may not come our plants receive a check from which many of them will not recover when the hoped-for rain

finally puts in its appearance. Therefore, if we would grow plants of any kind, we must see to it that the soil is kept at the necessary degree of moisture at the time when they ought to be making vigorous development. This being the case, don't wait for rain when you find the soil deficient in moisture, but resort to artificial watering promptly if you expect to tide your garden successfully over this critical period of its existence. *But*—don't begin to water it unless you are determined to continue to do so as long as water is needed.

Do not forego the use of the hoe in dry weather. Then is the time when the greatest amount of good can be done with it. I need not elaborate on this subject here, for in a preceding chapter I have written down the advice of my neighbor as to the importance of keeping the soil light and porous in seasons of drouth.

Now a few words about bed-making and

seed-sowing before bringing this chapter to an end.

As to beds, don't have any, unless your garden is so small that it will not admit of the use of the garden cultivator. Grow your vegetables in rows that will allow you to run the cultivator the entire length of the garden without turning. This not only simplifies matters greatly, but reduces the work to a minimum. Make the space between the rows wide or narrow to suit the vegetables that grow in them. Your cultivator can be easily adjusted to fit rows of all widths.

Never fritter away time and labor in making fancy-shaped beds for flowers. As the plants develop their branches will soon obliterate the outlines of the pattern that it costs so much trouble to make. Keep in mind the thought that flowers should always be grown for themselves, and that the shape of the beds they are grown in is of very little importance. As a general thing,

the flower-gardens that give most pleasure to owner and visitor are the simple rather than the elaborate ones.

Because you have but little space that can be devoted to gardening purposes is no reason why you should not have a garden.

You will be surprised to find what an amount of vegetables can be grown on a very small piece of ground. Have you ever read a little book by Charles Barnard, published twenty-five or thirty years ago, entitled "My Handkerchief Garden"? If not, get it and read it carefully, and profit by what the author has to say about the possibilities that exist in a garden only a few feet square. Make use of every inch of soil. It is inexcusable extravagance to let any go to waste.

The larger seeds of vegetables, and of some kinds of flowers, should be sown in shallow furrows, and covered lightly with soil. The old-fashioned method was to draw the hoe-

handle across the bed, making a trench an inch or more in depth, scattering the seed in it, and then returning to it the soil thrown out of it by the hoe-handle, thus covering the seed so deeply that a good deal of it failed to germinate. Of late years this practice has been discarded. We have learned that a slight covering is all that is necessary for nearly all plants, and that very fine seed requires no covering at all, but should simply be scattered *on the soil*, and then be pressed down into it with a smooth board. Making the soil compact will insure the retention of as much moisture as is necessary in facilitating the processes of germination.

Among flowers, Sweet Peas, Four-o'Clocks, Morning-Glories, and Ricinus are exceptions to the above rule. These, with the exception of the Sweet Pea, should be covered with about half an inch of soil. For the Sweet Pea,—which should be put into the

ground as soon as the soil is in working condition in spring—a trench at least four inches in depth should be made. Sow the seed thickly, and cover with an inch of the soil thrown out of the trench. Tramp it down to make it firm. When the seedlings have grown to a height of about three inches, draw in another inch of soil about them, and continue to do this from time to time, until all the soil from the trench has been returned to it. We give this plant this kind of treatment because it likes to have its roots deep in the soil where they will be cool and damp in hot, midsummer weather. This is the only annual adapted to general culture that can be sown very early in spring.

The best time to plant most vegetable and flowering plants at the north is from the tenth of May to the first of June. If one has a hotbed—and every gardener should have one—it is an easy matter to secure large

plants of many kinds of vegetables by the time it would be safe to put their seeds into the outdoor garden. I never advise starting them in pots and boxes in the living-room, for plants started under the conditions which invariably prevail there are almost certain to be failures, because of the difficulty of so regulating the temperature that the tender plants will make a healthy development. Unless they *are* healthy when the time comes to put them out-of-doors, they will suffer to such an extent by the change in conditions that, before they have fully recovered, plants from seed sown in the open ground will have gotten ahead of them. If early vegetables are wanted the hotbed must be depended on for strong and healthy plants.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

MANY times since I became the owner of a home I have been asked by persons inexperienced in gardening to tell them what vegetables I should advise them to attempt growing in a garden of their own, if they ever had one, as most of them hoped to have some time in the future. Most of these seekers after information were friends of ours who came from the city to spend Sunday with us, thus giving themselves an opportunity to sample the products of our garden. They declared that the vegetables we grew were of a flavor so superior to anything that was obtainable in the city markets that they were sure they must be new varieties, quite out of the ordinary. Some of them were

inclined to be incredulous when we told them that the fine flavor they spoke of was due to freshness rather than to any superior quality inherent in variety.

Those who have been in the habit of purchasing their vegetables in the city markets have no idea how much superior in all respects those are which are taken directly from the soil in which they grew. Those of the markets may have the appearance of perfect freshness, but that they are sadly lacking in this quality the housewife who is fortunate enough to have a garden of her own to choose from knows to her own satisfaction. Any vegetable loses some of its delicacy of flavor and crisp tenderness as soon as it is taken from the ground, and it is only when it goes directly from the garden to the kitchen that these qualities are retained in the greatest possible degree. There is about the freshly gathered vegetable an aroma, if I may be allowed the use of that term, which

begins to evaporate as soon as it leaves the ground. The housewife who takes pleasure in setting before her family or her guests the good things from the garden in a state of perfection—or as nearly that as is possible—will bear me out, I am quite sure, in what I have said.

Mary came to me one day that first summer, and said: "Do you know it seems to me that we have just begun really to live. I used to dread going to market, but I simply *had to,* because I could never depend on getting what I wanted unless I selected it myself. It's all different now. To go into the garden for the vegetables I want is almost like 'dropping in' on a neighbor for an informal chat. I presume you'll laugh at the idea, and accuse me of waxing sentimental, but I'm really on most friendly terms with everything that grows in our garden. To-day—now, please don't laugh!—I patted the cabbages on the heads they're

beginning to make, and I felt like shaking hands with the sweet corn that's beginning to show silk, and ——"

"Spare me, please," I said. "I'm as much in love with the garden as you are, but I can't go into rhetorical rhapsodies over it. I give expression to my appreciation of its good things when I meet them at the table."

"You'd enthuse as much as I do if you were a woman and had to get three meals a day for a family, week in and week out," responded my wife. "Before we had a garden I was often at my wit's end as to what to cook. Now there's a veritable embarrassment of riches. I pity—I really pity!—the woman who has to do her own cooking and hasn't a garden to draw on. If I were to engage in missionary work, I'd go up and down the land telling women who *might* have gardens but *don't* have them because they have an idea that the work is dirty or

quite unfit for a lady, just what I thought of them. I'd try to convince them of the error of their ways, and show them what opportunities for helpfulness in the economies of the household they are guilty of squandering. If I could only get them to *try* gardening for one season I'm quite sure I could make converts of most of them, and I should feel justified in considering myself a benefactor of the human race. None but those who have a garden of their own know how much of the family's living comes from it. Why, Dave, if we had a cow ——"

"There it is," I said, breaking in upon my wife's eulogy of gardens in general and our own in particular, "I've been expecting this ever since we became country people. I've read, dozens of times, that a garden and a cow will furnish three-quarters of a family's living, so you needn't go on with your lecture, my dear. But there's no use talking cow yet awhile. For one thing, we've no

place to keep one in if we had her, and there's no one to milk her if we owned one unless we did it ourselves, and that's out of the question at present. Some day, when the millennium of country life happens this way, we may indulge in the luxury of a Jersey——"

"Why, papa," spoke up Rob, who had been an interested listener to the conversation taking place between his mother and myself, "*I* could milk, I *know*, 'cause t' other day when I was over to Johnny Clark's he showed me how. He does it ev'ry day, and it's fun. If you'll get a cow I'll milk her. I'd just love to!"

But I insisted on laying the cow-question on the table. The time was not ripe for an investment of that kind.

I see, on looking over the pages that I have just written, that I have sadly digressed from the subject I had in mind. I set out to give a list of the vegetables I consider

best adapted to the requirements of the average family, for the benefit of those who may be "making garden" for the first time.

There should be sweet corn of at least two varieties—an early and a late kind; and if the size of the garden will admit of it, I should advise adding a variety that comes to maturity between the very early sort and the late. Stowell's Evergreen is the ideal late corn. It does not lose its tenderness and delicious flavor until the plant is killed by frost. With an early, a medium, and a late variety it is an easy matter to have this most delicious of all garden vegetables from August to October.

There should be two kinds of potatoes: one for summer use, and one for winter.

There should be at least two varieties of tomatoes: one that comes to maturity early in the season, and a later kind from which to can for winter use. The latter will make the basis for the piccalillies and chow-chows

with which every housewife delights to stock up in fall.

There should be early cucumbers for summer use, and a later variety for pickling.

There should be an early quick-growing beet for table use in midsummer, and a late variety for winter.

There should be a summer squash and a winter one, beans for stringing, and beans for shelling; parsnips, salsify, onions and carrots. Also lettuce and radishes.

And peas, of course. No garden can be considered as living up to its privileges if it does not include at least three varieties of this most toothsome vegetable. There should be a very early kind that will come to maturity about the first of July, an intermediate variety, and a late sort, like the Champion of England. It is possible, in this way, to make the green-pea season extend over a period of at least two months.

It is not advisable for me to make mention

of many particular varieties by name, for nearly all seedsmen have a habit of giving the varieties they sell a name of their own, thus making it a difficult matter for the amateur gardener to obtain the kinds I might make special mention of unless he happened to buy his seed from the same dealer I patronize. The name doesn't amount to much. It's quality that counts. By going through whatever catalogue comes into your hands, you can, by reading the *description* of each variety, familiarize yourself with the qualities of each, and, being guided by that instead of name, you will be reasonably sure of getting what you want. There are, however, certain standard kinds, like Stowell's Evergreen corn, Champion of England pea, Savoy cabbage, and Crimson Globe radish that are listed alike in nearly all the dealers' catalogues. But if selection is made with reference to the quality of the variety rather than its name, satisfaction is

pretty sure to result, since nine times out of ten all the difference there is between the kinds described in the various catalogues is that of name only.

Don't take too much stock in what some of the dealers will have to say about new varieties and "novelties." New kinds *may* have all the good qualities of the old ones, and perhaps be improvements on them in some respects; but we cannot be sure about this until they have been tested for two or three seasons. Therefore it is safe to confine one's selection to the kinds whose merit has been proved by years of cultivation in the gardens of those who make it a rule to grow nothing but the best.

CHAPTER IX

BEAUTIFYING THE HOME-GROUNDS

In planting shrubs and perennials on our lawn we should have made some serious mistakes if we had not listened to the advice of the flower-loving neighbor of whom mention has already been made. As it was, several mistakes *were* made, for it was not possible for us to have her with us at all times to tell us what to do. These mistakes were those which persons who have had little or no experience in this phase of gardening may usually be expected to make.

We selected some plants without first consulting her, as we ought to have done, and the result was that we invested our money in several sorts that were not hardy enough to stand our climate, and some that were not adapted to amateur culture. More than

half of the hardy plants that we set out were given to us by our generous friend, who would have been willing, I think, to divide her last shrub with any one who loved flowers. We found out the mistakes that we made with annuals the first season, but it was not until the following spring, when several of the shrubs and perennials we had set out failed to grow, that we discovered what a poor selection we had made in this class of plants.

The fact is, the amateur gardener has no means of knowing just what plants to select unless he has experienced friends to go to for advice. The catalogues, while not intentionally misleading, often really prove to be so. They classify as hardy kinds that are so at the north only under certain conditions, and these conditions they fail to make mention of, leaving the inexperienced person to take it for granted that they are perfectly hardy under *all* conditions. The home-

maker who is lacking in the knowledge of plants has to learn about these things by a personal experience that extends over a considerable period, and represents quite an expense.

Perhaps a word as to the difference between shrubs and perennials may be in order. A shrub is a plant whose branches live during the winter; a perennial is one which dies to the ground each fall, but whose roots survive from year to year.

I think I can give the readers of this book the most practical kind of assistance in selecting plants for beautifying their home-grounds by telling them what kinds we found most satisfactory.

Among the shrubs I would give first place to Spirea Van Houetti. It is hardy at the north, is of the easiest culture, and is wonderfully beautiful. I can imagine nothing more attractive, during the early part of June, than a fine specimen of this shrub in

Spirea Van Houetti, a Bush of Exceedingly Graceful Shape

full bloom. Its habit is ideal. Without any training it forms a bush of exceedingly graceful shape, with long and slender branches extending outward in all directions in such a manner as to make it a fountain of charming foliage from May to November. During its flowering season it will literally be covered with pure white blossoms, so thickly set along the branches that bend beneath their weight that they crowd each other, and hide most of the foliage. I should not like to be obliged to confine my selection to one shrub, but were I to do so I am quite sure that this Spirea would be my choice. Planted singly it is always pleasing. Set in rows, as a substitute for a hedge-plant, it will afford more pleasure than anything else in the shrub-line. There are several other members of the Spirea family, but none of them will compare with Van Houetti, when judged from the standpoint of pure beauty.

Don't make the mistake of pruning it. It doesn't need pruning unless some accident happens to it. Even then it is safest to let it take care of itself, for it knows what to do better than we do. All plants do that, for that matter. I have known many shrubs to be so mutilated that it seemed as if it was not possible for them to regain their native grace, but, let alone for a season, they overcame their injuries and became again things of beauty.

Next to the Spirea as a desirable shrub for the home-grounds I would place the Lilac. I should have four varieties of it: the white, the Persian, the old-fashioned kind, and a double variety. The white Lilac is purity itself. Because of its strong, robust character and tree-like habit of growth when trained to a single stalk, it should have a place in the rear of smaller shrubs. The Persian variety is more graceful in habit of growth than any other member of the family,

but its flowers are not as pleasing in color, and lack the delightful fragrance which is characteristic of the other kinds named. Its chief merit is its gracefulness and its ability to make a most ornamental shrub of itself when given exposed positions on the lawn. I advise a double variety because its flowers are borne in trusses that make the bush look as if covered with plumes. I include the old-fashioned kind in my list because it is so beautiful, so exquisitely fragrant, so floriferous, and so capable of taking care of itself. Then, too, it deserves a place about the home because of the delightful associations connected with it as a home-flower. Old fashioned it may be, but to me it seems all the better for that. The fact that it has held its own so long against the lengthening list of newcomers goes to prove its merits.

Many persons object to Lilacs because of their habit of suckering freely from the old plant. I have no trouble in keeping them

within bounds. I run the lawn-mower over the ground, close to the bush, and clip off every sucker as soon as it shows itself.

The Syringa is almost as desirable as the Lilac, because of its hardiness, its beauty, and its sweetness. The Weigelia ought not to be overlooked. Nor should the Amygdalus, better known as Flowering Almond. In some localities it suffers from exposure in severe winters. But it can be taken safely through the severest of them by simply bending its flexible branches to the ground and giving them a covering of hay, straw, or evergreen branches. A bush of this plant, in bloom in early spring, never fails to attract attention and to challenge admiration by its delicate pink-and-white beauty, every branch so thickly set with flowers that it seems a portion of a broken wreath.

At least one plant of Deutzia should be in every collection. I should advise Deutzia Gracilis, because of its extremely graceful

habit and its profusion of pure white sweet-scented blossoms.

Of course there should be Roses in every collection, but not many of them unless you have a good deal of time that can be devoted to them. Half a dozen kinds will demand more attention than all the shrubs I have made mention of, and the perennials about which I shall have something to say later on ; that is if they are cared for as they must be in order to get satisfactory results from them. A neglected Rose will live on indefinitely, but it will afford little or no pleasure, because it is unable to do itself justice. Unless Roses are well cared for they are sure to disappoint. But so royally beautiful are they, when well grown, that no person who loves fine flowers can afford to be without a few kinds.

I should advise the hardier sorts, such as the Provence or Cabbage, which gives a profuse crop of flowers in June, and a few

hybrid perpetuals or hybrid teas. These belong to a class that blooms with great freedom early in the summer, and thereafter at intervals, if given proper treatment, until the coming of cold weather. The flowers of this class are large, perfect in form, and for the most part exquisitely fragrant. They are really the finest of all Roses. The catalogues of the florists describe the many varieties so fully that it is unnecessary for me to do so here. A consultation of these catalogues will enable one to select the colors which appeal most strongly to individual taste.

You will notice that this class is called hardy by the growers, but you are not to take it for granted that they are sufficiently so as to be able to stand a northern winter without protection. Their *roots* will survive the severest season, but we get no satisfaction from them unless we save some branches to bear flowers. These will be winter-killed if left exposed. In order to save them the bush should be

bent to the ground and covered with three or four inches of dry soil, after which a covering of tarred paper or something that will shed rain should be added. Before laying the plant down the branches which have grown during the season should be shortened at least half their length. By doing this we coax what is left of them to throw out strong side-shoots in spring, and from these we get finer flowers than we should from the old branches if left unpruned. Immediately after blooming the branches should again be shortened to induce the growth of other branches on which the flowers of the after-season are to be borne.

The Rose is a gourmand, and in order to grow it well it must be given a large amount of the richest kind of food every spring. Unless worms and bugs are prevented from doing their deadly work on the bushes in spring, when buds are developing, they will be ruined. Fortunately, in Nicoticide, the

standard insecticide, we have a safe and sure weapon with which to fight the enemies of the Rose.

By all means order plants on their own roots. Grafted plants frequently die off at the point where the cion is inserted in the root. Shoots will be sent up from below this point, but from these we will get no flowers.

I should advise planting your Roses by themselves. Give them a place that is sheltered from north and east winds, and that slopes toward the south, if possible. Many kinds are susceptible to disease if planted where cold drafts can reach them. While a plant in bloom is beautiful enough to be given a place on any lawn, it is never very attractive when out of bloom, and for this reason I should give all my Roses a place by themselves, where they can receive the peculiar treatment they require.

I must plead guilty to having overlooked the Rambler Roses in what has been said about

Where a Climber is Desired, the Dorothy Perkins is the Rose to Plant

the family in the preceding paragraphs. While I consider these inferior in all respects to the kinds named, I certainly should not like to be without two or three varieties of them. The Crimson Rambler is so well known that it requires no special mention here. But much superior to it in many ways is the Dorothy Perkins, with its dainty pink flowers, and its really vine-like habit of growth. Where a climber is desired this is the rose to plant.

I do not think it advisable to extend the list given above, for the reason that, on small grounds, a large number of shrubs will so clutter up the place that, after the first season or two, all individuality is wholly lost. I hold that unless a shrub has ample space in which to display its charms it is not being given fair treatment, because it is impossible for it to do itself justice when so crowded in between others that it has no elbow-room. A

few of the best shrubs, judiciously located about the home, will make the place attractive, but too many will totally destroy the effect aimed at. Therefore I have thought best to confine mention to a few standard kinds—really the cream of the list of desirable ones for amateur use—because the beginner in gardening stands the greatest chance of success with them. Of course there are others of great merit, but the cultivation of them I should leave to the owners of large grounds where they can be given the care of an experienced gardener.

I have learned to discriminate sharply among perennials. There are many that do not seem to me worth growing. They occupy as much space and require as much care as the more desirable kinds, but they are lacking in nearly all the qualities that the home-flower ought to have. Persons give them place in their gardens because they like va-

riety, but visitors pass them by with a glance. They put me in mind of the human nonentities we meet on the street every day. We are conscious of seeing them, but we forget all about them when they are out of sight. The only kinds of plants that I should give place about the home are those with an individuality, or a personality, if I may be allowed to use the term in connection with plants. The kinds that make the home-place attractive are those with which one can make friends. I believe that there can be friendships with flowers the same as there are with human beings.

At the head of the list of the most desirable perennials for the decoration of the home-grounds I should place the Phlox. I should confine my selection to a few varieties. The rose-colored varieties are daintily delicate and beautiful. The carmines are brilliantly showy. So are the crimsons and scarlets. The lilac and mauve varieties

have the peculiar charm that belongs to the pastel shades of coloring. I should keep each one of these colors by itself, using with them white varieties to give the contrast necessary to make them most effective. To secure the best results, the Phlox should be planted in clumps or masses, or in rows, with the taller sorts at the rear. By graduating the plants according to their height, it is an easy matter to secure a bank of almost solid color-effect. Some varieties grow to a height of five feet. The dwarf kinds are little more than a foot tall. There are many of intermediate habit. In order to make sure that we are getting the plants into the places where they belong we must study the catalogues, in which the height of each kind is mentioned.

There is considerable difference in the flowering season of the Phlox. It is not well to mix the early and late bloomers. With a proper selection of varieties it is an easy

matter to have flowers from this plant from July to late September. It is to the garden of the amateur what the Geranium is to the window-garden. Anybody can grow it, in almost any kind of soil. It is entirely hardy. I have never known it to be attacked by any insect or disease. Once in about three years old plants will be benefited by having their roots divided. Discard the older portions, and replant the newer. If this is done your collection of Phlox will always be in excellent condition.

Next to the Phlox I should place the Peony. If there is a plant that is more capable of taking care of itself I should like to know the name of it. We frequently come across specimens of the Peony in old gardens where they were planted fifty or sixty years ago—sturdy, vigorous plants with a spread of five or six feet, and often a hundred flower-stalks, some of them bearing four or five flowers each. The decorative

value of such a plant cannot be overestimated. And these old plants, we are told by their owners, receive no attention whatever except an occasional application of manure. Yet, in spite of neglect, they grow larger and larger year after year. No one ever hears of a Peony's dying. As to their beauty, there can be no two opinions. The flowers of some varieties rival the Rose in delicacy of color and form, and many of the newer sorts have a most delightful fragrance. For use in large vases, as a cut flower, the Peony stands at the very head of the list.

The Peony likes a rather heavy soil—one that will hug its roots firmly—and refuses to do its best in soils that are light with sand. It objects most emphatically to a disturbance of its roots. If you dig into an old clump to obtain tubers for a friend you may be pretty sure that next year you will get few if any flowers from the plant. This

being the case, make it a rule to let the plant alone after getting it started. If a neighbor expresses a desire for one like it, give him or her the address of the dealer from whom your plant was procured; but, as you value its welfare, sturdily refuse to interfere with your own plant. This may seem like selfish advice, and contrary to the general belief that flower-lovers are so generous that they are glad to share their floral treasures with others; but if you do not follow it you will find there will be a constant demand for a "toe" from your plant, and the result will be that it will never attain to the dignity which characterizes a well-developed specimen.

Old barn-yard manure in generous quantity should be heaped about and over each plant in fall, and dug into the ground about it in spring, taking care not to dig deep enough to come in contact with the roots of the plant. To secure the best effect from

it, plant in rows, and at least four feet apart in the row, with white varieties alternating with the pink and crimson kinds.

When we set out our first plants we located them here and there, each one by itself, but when we rearranged the garden, later on, we set them in a long row bordering the drive to the rear of the house. Every season, at flowering time, this row is a mass of magnificent color—a flower-show in itself. Positively all the attention the plants receive is a yearly application of manure, and the prevention of encroachment by grass.

The good old Hollyhock deserves a place in all gardens. It fits in charmingly with the somewhat restricted list of desirable home-flowers, for years ago few home-gardens could be found that did not give it a prominent place. Because of its tall and stately habit it should be planted in the rear of lower-growing plants.

Another equally desirable perennial is Delphinium, with its long spikes of flowers of a richer blue than any other plant can boast. Put this beside a yellow Hollyhock and the contrast is as delightful as the colors are harmonious.

I might add to this list, but I do not feel like advising the home-maker to undertake the culture of a great number of this class of plants. Where there are many the effect is not as pleasing as where there are few, and these are grown in masses or clumps. It is well to keep each kind by itself, as far as possible, unless one likes to have his plants in rows at the sides or rear of the home-grounds. When this method of planting is followed, great care must be taken to place only such colors next each other as are harmonious. A jumble of inharmonious colors is positively painful to those who have a keen eye for color-effects. Without color-harmony it is impossible to secure the

impression of restfulness which lends such a charm to well-arranged home-grounds.

The care required each year by perennials is slight as compared with that demanded by annuals. Once established, they are good for years if given a liberal application of some good fertilizer each season. This should be given in spring before they begin to grow. They require no pruning. None of the kinds I have named will need winter protection, though all of them will be benefited by it. A covering of straw, hay, evergreen branches, or coarse litter can be given with very little trouble and I should advise it whenever it is possible to procure the necessary material.

When our annuals came into bloom we discovered the mistake we had made with them. There were too many kinds, and as each kind had been planted without considering its relation to the others there was a riot of color that made one's eyes ache.

The result of our first year's experience with this class of flowers was that, in succeeding years, we grew but few kinds—Asters, Phlox Drummondi, Calliopsis, Petunias, Verbenas, Portulacca, Poppies, Morning-Glories, and Sweet Peas.

To each of these, excepting the vines, we gave a bed of its own. It is never satisfactory to mix annuals. If their colors harmonize their habits of growth do not.

A few kinds, well grown, will always afford pleasure, while a large number of miscellaneous sorts seldom does so, because the eye is confused by the kaleidoscopic play of changing colors that characterizes the gardens in which "a little of everything" is grown.

Some of my readers may not be satisfied with the selection I have made, preferring to grow varieties for which they have a special liking. Of course individual tastes can be gratified in this respect, but in making their selection I should advise them not to over-

look what I have just said about using few rather than many kinds. I feel that this point should be given special emphasis. If the reader will give the matter a little thought, I am quite confident he will discover that the gardens which have pleased him most have been those in which the varieties were so few that the individuality of each was seen to advantage. When we go to a large social function where we meet a good many strange people we do not get on intimate terms with any of them, and we go away with a hazy, confused idea of the various personalities we have met. If we were to meet them on the morrow we should recognize but few of them. But where the gathering is small, it is an easy matter to become friends with those we have not seen before. One real friendship affords us great pleasure, while a superficial acquaintance which puts us simply on bowing-terms with others is of little influence in our life.

It is much the same in our relations with the flowers in our gardens. In order really to enjoy their society we must become intimate with them, and the degree of intimacy which results in friendship can come about only by limiting the list.

CHAPTER X

HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

For the benefit of the amateur gardener I propose to devote this chapter to hints and suggestions of a miscellaneous character, feeling quite sure that he will find them useful during the early period of his garden experiences.

In transplanting seedlings, a trowel is of great convenience in lifting them from the seed-bed. It enables one to do this work in such a manner as to leave the roots of the plant intact. But when it comes to putting them in the places where they are to grow, there is nothing quite equal to the fingers. Have the soil so mellow that it is an easy matter to make a hole in it for the reception of the seedling with the fingers of the left hand; then, with the right hand, drop the

plant into place; after which, with both hands, draw the soil about it and press the earth gently but firmly about the roots. Never be in too great a hurry when you do this, for haste is not compatible with good work. If a seedling is handled carefully, well watered after being put into the ground, and shaded for a day or two, it will seldom wilt, but will keep on growing as if nothing had happened. Much depends on treating it in such a manner as not to disturb its roots. That is the most important item to be considered in transplanting.

If the soil where you would make a garden is heavy, with considerable clay in it, you will find it difficult to grow good vegetables there, as nearly all of them like a light soil. One of sandy loam gives the best results. A heavy one can be lightened by adding clear, sharp sand, and working it in thoroughly. If it is possible to procure loam or wood's earth, it is an excellent plan to add this also. The

first application of clear sand to a clay soil will be of as much benefit to it as one of manure. Of course the sand supplies little in the way of plant-food, as manure does, but it puts a heavy soil in a condition to take advantage of some of the elements in the air which can be appropriated only through the agency of a plant's roots; hence the immediate benefit resulting from the application of whatever makes the soil lighter and more porous.

Vegetables like the radish, which must make a rapid growth in order to be palatable, must be given a place where they will receive the full warmth of the sun. They can be grown to perfection only in a soil of very rich loam. True, they *can* be grown in ordinary garden beds along with other vegetables, but they will be lacking in that crisp tenderness which makes the radish so delicious an accompaniment to a spring meal. Lettuce should also be coaxed to rapid development in order to insure tenderness, with-

out which it is not enjoyable. It is a good plan to sow seed of this plant at intervals of three or four weeks in order to have a succession of this favorite salad-plant, as the leaves of young plants have a much finer flavor than those of older ones, even though the latter may retain their tenderness.

Before starting my garden, I had read a good deal about "intensive farming," and when I made my first garden I planned to get as much out of the soil as possible. I had already marked off lines between the rows in which large-growing vegetables were planted, where I proposed to sow radishes and lettuce, when Hayes came along and asked what I was doing. When I told him, he laughed at me.

"I wouldn't give much for such radishes and lettuce as you'll be likely to grow there," he said. "Of course you *can* grow them there, after a fashion, but I don't think you'd find them very enjoyable. They

should be given heat and a very rich soil. In other words, you must force them to rapid growth in order to get satisfactory results from them, and you can't do that without a hotbed. Planting them between rows in the garden isn't the proper thing to do with these vegetables. Early beets and turnips can be grown there to advantage, but not these plants."

I had so often proved my friend's superior knowledge about gardening that I should have followed his advice. But I could not rid myself of the belief that really good lettuce and radishes *could* be grown between rows in the garden, thus saving considerable space that would otherwise go to waste, and I determined to experiment along that line. I *did* grow both there, but we found them so inferior to those we grew in the hotbed that we made but little use of them. I planted early beets and turnips between some of the rows, and these grew well and came to matu-

rity before the larger plants required the space that was filled by them.

I was not aware that lettuce made good "greens" until Mary made the discovery that if it is cooked with salt pork, to season and flavor it, it makes a really delicious dish for the dinner table.

Speaking of greens reminds me that I ought not to lose the opportunity of saying a good word for beets, spinach, and mustard. My wife declares that it's her opinion that everybody would have better health in spring if they ate more greens. This avowed belief of hers grows largely out of her fondness for them, I am inclined to think, but there may be an element of scientific truth in it.

Young beets—those we have to thin out from the rows where seedlings stand too thick—certainly make a delightful addition to the bill of fare if plenty of butter is used as a dressing, with a dash of vinegar and a

dusting of black pepper. Use both roots and tops, as long as the latter remain tender. When the roots become of some size, it is better to use them alone, with a dressing of *hot* vinegar, made rich with butter. Young beet tops are superior to spinach, which depends almost entirely on seasoning for flavor. Mustard greens have a pungency which stimulates the jaded appetite. Like lettuce they are much improved by being cooked with salt pork.

But in my judgment there is no other material for greens quite equal to the dandelion in its tender state, just before it comes into bloom. A platter of it, seasoned with salt pork, well buttered and peppered, and garnished with hard-boiled eggs, is a dish fit to set before a king. Salt pork, the reader will see, seems to be quite necessary with any kind of greens in order to give them an appetizing flavor. Others may prefer bacon—I notice that many cooks advise its use—but

in my opinion its smoky flavor does not seem to harmonize with the more delicate flavor of the green itself. This, however, is a matter of taste.

Tomato vines should always be given a support of some kind. If they are allowed to sprawl all over, as is generally the case, some of the fruit will come in contact with the soil and this will almost always cause the fruit to decay at the point of contact. Set posts in a square about each plant, nail laths across them over which to train the vines, and you will never have cause to complain of your tomatoes rotting.

Most varieties of tomatoes behave as if they had an idea that summer was going to last forever, for they keep on blossoming and setting fruit during the early fall months. They should be prevented from doing this by pinching off the ends of the vines. This throws the strength of the plant into the

development of the earlier settings, and encourages the ripening process. Allow no plants to blossom after the first of August.

If frosts come before all the fruit of the tomato has ripened, pull the vines up by the roots and hang them in a sunny place—against a wall if possible—and the green fruit will ripen perfectly. It will be necessary, however, to cover the vines on frosty nights. This is easily done by hanging a blanket over them. By doing this one may have fresh tomatoes up to the very edge of winter.

I have not made mention of melons as a garden product; not because they cannot be grown there, but because so few persons who attempt their culture seem willing to give them the treatment necessary to the production of a really fine article. In order to grow a musk or water melon well, the soil must be extremely rich, well drained, and kept light and open during the entire sea-

son. Insects must be prevented from injuring the vines while young, as they will surely do if not interfered with. There is a small, striped bug which often does great injury to cucumbers and squashes, and it will attack the melon, and often destroy it unless put to rout. The surest and safest insecticide I have ever tried in fighting this bug is the extract of the nicotine principle of tobacco, already referred to, which is on the market under the name of Nicoticide. A small quantity of this, mixed with water, and sprayed over the plants, will rout the enemy effectually. I should advise every gardener to keep it on hand for immediate use in case there is a bug-invasion. It can be procured of any dealer in seeds or plants. It is almost sure to be needed on the cucumbers and squashes if melons are not grown. It will be found equally valuable in the flower garden, in protecting Asters from the ravages of the black beetle. This pest often

ruins these plants in an incredibly short time if warfare is not waged against it as soon as the first one is discovered.

The best fertilizer for melons is old, thoroughly rotted cow-manure. Indeed, if I could not procure this fertilizer, I should not attempt to grow the melon; from my experience I find it does not do well when chemical or commercial fertilizers are used.

My wife reminds me that I have neglected to say anything about peppers. She says they ought to be in every garden because of their value for pickling purposes. And she knows, for she has the knack of making a most delectable compound from them in connection with half-ripened tomatoes, flavored with onion, and boiled in vinegar to which sugar and spices of all kinds have been added. It is hardly necessary, I think, for me to give the recipe for this piccalilli, or Chili sauce, or whatever name its maker

sees fit to give it, because it seems to be an article whose composition is well known to all housewives, judging from the pungent odors which issue from most country kitchens during the early fall months.

All but the dwarf varieties of the pea family must be given a support of some kind in order to secure a good crop from them. Without support the vines will crinkle down beneath their own weight, and frequently the density of their foliage will retain moisture to such an extent that both leaves and pods mildew, thus greatly injuring if not wholly destroying the crop. If brush is obtainable it furnishes a better support than woven wire netting, which most persons use.

Most enthusiastic gardeners want to get the start of everybody else, and put seed into the ground before it has become warm and in proper condition to facilitate immediate germination. This is a mistake—an illus-

tration of the old saying that haste makes waste,—for too early planting generally results in a loss of the seed used and this necessitates beginning all over again, thus making it necessary to invest in another supply of seed, and of doing, for a second time, the work which might better have waited for conditions favorable to healthy plant growth.

My advice to the amateur gardener is not to be in too great a hurry in spring. Give the soil a chance to get rid of its surplus moisture. Let the sun penetrate and warm it. Then, and not till then, even if it seems to be getting late in the season, make your garden. This advice is the outgrowth of my own experience. More than once, in my attempt to have a garden earlier than my neighbors, I have been obliged to plant some kinds of vegetables a second time in the same season, thus wasting time, labor, and money. Go slow. Our seasons are long

enough to justify you in waiting for favorable conditions before making your garden.

Whatever fertilizer is made use of in the garden should be thoroughly mixed with the soil before seed is put into it. Work the ground over and over until it is so fine and mellow that it is impossible to find a lump as large as a pea. This is one of the important things in successful gardening. I should not advise the use of a large quantity of manure to begin with. Too much rich food in the early stages of plant-growth may result in weakness—a sort of vegetable dyspepsia growing out of the inability of the seedling properly to digest it. By and by, as the plant develops and grows strong, another application can be given to advantage, and later on another, the aim being to keep the plant always going steadily forward. There must be no halts in its development if we would enable it to do itself justice.

Do not be satisfied with keeping weeds

out of the garden itself. Look for them along its borders, and in the nooks and corners where some of them will be sure to locate themselves hoping to escape discovery. With many kinds of weeds one plant will produce seed enough to make a good-sized garden a thicket of weeds the next season. Make it a rule to destroy every weed as soon as seen, whether in the garden or in close proximity to it. By doing this you will save yourself a large amount of work in the future.

CHAPTER XI

A PRESCRIPTION FOR NERVES

SAID Mary to me one day after reading something that I had written about the garden:

"While you're singing the garden's praises as an adjunct of housekeeping and good living, why don't you say something about it from the health-aspect? Make work in it a prescription for 'nerves.' You've touched on the subject incidentally, I see, but it seems to me that it deserves more attention than you have given it."

"But this book I'm at work on isn't supposed to be a medical treatise," I said. "It's a book about home-making."

"Yes, I know," responded my wife. "But if you put the benefits to be derived from work in the garden before the public in such

a manner as to call particular attention to it, instead of incidentally as you have done, don't you think you would do a lot of good?"

"Possibly, if the public could be induced to read it," I replied.

"You expect it to read the rest of the book, don't you?" asked she.

"I don't know that I do," I answered. "Of course I *hope* it will be read, but there's no telling what the public will think or do about it."

"It seems to me," said Mary, looking very thoughtful, "that the subject deserves special attention. Isn't health a necessity in the welfare of the home? It can never be what it ought to be unless health *is* there. That's why it seems to me that a chapter devoted to a consideration of the subject would be perfectly in keeping with the trend of the book —a consideration of another phase of home-making, the importance of which ought not

to be overlooked. Now, really, don't you think so?"

"Perhaps you're right," I said. "I'll think the matter over."

I did so. That explains how what follows came to be written, and why it has been incorporated into a book supposed to treat the subject of home-making in its physical aspects rather than from a physiological standpoint.

It was not written until after I had proved, by personal experience, the truthfulness of some of the statements made in it. Many a time during the first two or three years of country life I came home from a hard day's work in the office weary almost to the point of exhaustion, but after supper the garden's spell drew me out-of-doors, and I worked in the moonlight until I had thrown off my weariness, and put myself into a condition that made the night's rest as sweet and dreamless as that of a healthy child.

Often it seemed to me that when I took hold of the hoe-handle it served all the purposes of a lightning-rod in storm-time. Through it the worry and fretfulness of a weary mind as well as the languor of a tired body passed off into the ground with which it came in contact. I proved to my own satisfaction the tonic of hard work—a tonic that after a little needs no sugared draught to disguise its flavor. It's like eating grape-fruit. At first the bitter taste predominates, but by and by the bitter becomes so pleasant to the tongue that, paradoxical as the statement may sound, the acidity of the fruit is turned to sweetness.

But I do not write from personal experience alone. I have kept my eyes open. I have studied the effect of outdoor life on others. I have seen what the garden is doing for them, and what it would do for others if they would let it. And out of this observation of a phase of life whose impor-

tance is as yet but imperfectly understood—hardly guessed, in fact—has grown what is said below about health in the garden.

We often come across women who say that they are "all run down," without being able to tell of any positive physical ailment. Inquiry generally develops the fact that they have overworked; that they have been confined to the house the greater part of the time for years, perhaps, busy with household duties, and that in caring for others they have neglected to care for themselves.

Though I am not an M. D., I take the liberty of prescribing for patients of this class. My prescription is a course of treatment in the garden. I insist on their getting out-of-doors where the air is pure, and the sunshine bright and warm, and Nature is waiting to give her pleasant companionship to whoever signifies a desire to make her acquaintance.

There is health in the garden, but because

one is obliged to dig for it some persons prefer to keep on with their old miserable-ness day after day, and year after year. These are the incurables—the "chronic" cases that one cannot expect to do much with, or for. But those who are willing to exert themselves in an effort to get back the tone that life has lost will find that work in the garden is a better tonic than our doctors have any record of in their pharmacopœia. The earth fairly tingles with life in spring, and by putting ourselves in contact with it we absorb some of this vitality. We breathe in the wine of a new life. We thrill with a thousand sensations that can come only from putting ourselves in close touch with Nature.

You can tell a woman who needs a change from indoors to outdoors that she ought to take more exercise where she will get the benefit of fresh air and sunshine, but if you advise walking as that exercise, the chances are that she won't walk much. That kind

of exercise doesn't appeal to her, and to make whatever kind of exercise is taken effective it must be something that affords pleasure; something that a woman can enjoy more than she enjoys doing a thing from a sense of duty. What is needed is some form of exercise that *has an object in it* —a definite object rather than the more or less abstract one of "regaining health." Give her a few packages of flower-seeds, if she is a woman who is fond of flowers, and arouse in her an enthusiasm to have a garden of her own, and she will get the very best kind of exercise out of her attempts to carry out the plan, and the "definite object" —in other words, the garden—that she has in mind will keep her so delightfully busy that she will forget all about the health-features of the undertaking, until it dawns upon her with startling suddenness, some fine day, that she "has gotten her health back." How or when it came she may not be able

to tell if you ask her. All she knows is that she feels like a new woman.

After that there will be no necessity to repeat the prescription, for one year's half-way successful work in the garden fixes the habit for all time in almost every instance where it is tried. I verily believe that nothing else can afford so much pleasure and exercise in happy combination, or exert a greater fascination over those who allow themselves to come under its influence.

I cannot tell what wonderful and delightful things I have learned in the garden. It is like having the Book of Nature opened before you, and being taught its lore by the book's own author. You see magical things taking place about you every day, and every day there are more of them, to set you thinking and wondering. You may work until you are tired, but you do not realize physical wear and tear because your mind has something of greater importance over which to

busy itself. Only after the work is done will you become conscious of physical weariness, and then it is that you find out what the luxury of rest is. For, to fully appreciate rest, we must first understand what it is to be really tired. Lassitude, *ennui*,—these do not give us a real knowledge of genuine tiredness, therefore we are not in a condition to receive the full benefit of that rest which means a reaction of the physical system until we have done some kind of work that makes reaction necessary in order to establish a normal equilibrium. The rest that comes after one gets really tired is so full of delightful sensations that we admit to ourselves, when we experience it, that it is richly worth the price we have to pay for it.

There is a subtle charm about garden work from its very beginning. The seed we sow has a mystery enfolded in it. The processes of germination are as fascinating as a fairy tale. The development of the

tiny seedling is a source of constant wonder. We watch for the first tiny bud with eager impatience, and it has to be alert if it succeeds in opening its heart to the sunshine without our being on hand to observe the process. Spring begins the story; summer carries it forward; and autumn seems to complete it, but there is always the promise of the retelling of it another year to keep us interested from the end of one season to the beginning of another. Garden work is a sort of thousand-and-one days' entertainment, in which interest is continually stimulated. There is always something to look forward to—always something new.

The woman who grows weary over the monotony of household duties, but cannot put them wholly aside, will find relaxation in the garden. The change will rest her. And the woman who has no household duties to claim her attention needs some-

thing in which to become interested. Both will find the necessary stimulus in growing flowers and vegetables, caring for shrubs, and doing the myriad things that may be found waiting to be done about the home outside the dwelling.

In order to get the full benefit, the work must not be "played at." Set about it because you mean to accomplish something. A week after you have begun in earnest you will find yourself looking forward impatiently to the hour that takes you out-of-doors. You will forget about the gloves that you have probably provided yourself with, you won't be bothered with veils, tan will have no terrors for you, and you will look upon dirt with a tolerance never felt before because you begin to see the possibilities in it. You will go back to the house after an hour in the garden with an appetite that will make plain bread and butter delicious.

CHAPTER XII

CORRECTING MISTAKES

I HAVE said elsewhere that when we made our selection of shrubs and perennials we made a serious mistake by including in the list many kinds about which we had not taken the trouble to inform ourselves. When we planted them we made mistake number two.

The fact must not be overlooked that neither my wife nor myself had had any experience in gardening. We loved flowers, but we knew very little about their habits, and less about the satisfactory arrangement of them on the home-grounds. This explains how the second mistake came to be made.

It consisted in planting our shrubs and perennials in prim rows in front of and at

the sides of the house. This led to, or involved, mistake number three—that of spoiling the effect of the lawn by cluttering it with shrubs and plants to such an extent that not only the beauty but the idea which should find expression in a lawn was lost sight of. A lawn, if it means anything, means restfulness, and stands between the house and street as a bit of peaceful landscape suggestive of seclusion and aloofness from the public. In order to secure this effect there must be an unbroken expanse of it—a breadth, though on a small scale, to suggest distance, and to add to the dignity of the home by allowing it to assert itself. The house must be undisturbed by petty details which crowd themselves in between it and the observant passer-by; we destroy the dignity of the lawn by scattering shrubs and flower-beds all over it. The eye measures distance by objects which appear between it and a distant point, and these ob-

jects break up the effect of breadth on the small lawn. Hence, to make a bit of lawn look as large as possible we must refrain from introducing any object that will catch and hold the attention of the eye.

We discovered the mistake made in the location of our plants almost as soon as we had made it, but too late in the season to undo it. When we came to mow the lawn the difficulty of doing good work because of the care required in trying to mow about plants without injuring them became disagreeably apparent. Mowing had to be done slowly, because of the impossibility of running the mower more than a few feet before it came in contact with something. Any one who has ever run a lawn-mower knows that in order to do a good job it must be given sufficient space in which to acquire considerable momentum. We soon came to the conclusion that if we wanted a lawn that would be a thing of beauty and a joy for

a term of years the plants we had set out would have to be located somewhere else.

Mistake number four was fortunately discovered before matters had gone very far. It grew out of our ignorance of the material we were at work with. Because the plants we set out were small we put them close together. But they made such vigorous growth the first season that we soon came to the conclusion that our front yard would be nothing more or less than a thicket, a perfect jumble of "green things growing," by the end of the second season. Thus it was that we learned the lesson that the beginner in gardening must learn—the lesson of looking ahead. The tiny bush you plant to-day will be a big bush two or three years from now, if nothing happens to it, and we must keep this fact in mind when we set out our plants. No shrub can display its beauties to full advantage when crowded for room. Remember this, and at planting-time

try to see with the mind's eye *what is to be* rather than *what is.* Our eagerness for immediate effect must not be allowed to get the upper hand of our good judgment. Better to wait for results that may be made satisfactory by the exercise of a little forethought than sacrifice future beauty in our desire to make a brave showing to-day.

When the time came for a reconsideration of our planting system we had learned that it pays to look about and see what other people have done rather than rush blindly ahead and depend upon luck to prevent one from paying the penalty of ignorance. Before the "reconstruction period" began, we went on a tour of inspection among homes similar to ours in most respects, and when we came to something that pleased us we made a study of it, and the methods by which pleasing effects had been secured. And we found out this: The most satisfactory arrangement of shrubs and plants on small home-grounds is

to put them at the sides and rear of the place. Set low-growing kinds near the street, and arrange the others so that there will be a gradual increase in height as you work toward the rear. Back of the house or yard one can use to excellent advantage kinds that may be described as large bushes or small trees. In this way we provide a sort of frame for the home-picture. No system of planting is easier to carry out, or more satisfactory in the end.

It was not until the third year of our life in the country that we completed the rearrangement of our grounds. It involved a good deal of hard work, but when the re-set shrubs and plants had become established and begun to make a strong growth the result was so pleasing that we felt richly repaid for all the labor it had cost. We had discarded all but the best of the collection, and had the satisfaction of knowing that we now had one of permanent value. Shrubs were inter-

spersed with perennials, thus making a mixed border about six feet in width at the narrowest parts of it. I had never been an admirer of straight lines in ornamental gardening, and in planning the border I indulged in curves of varying width in the inner side, thus preventing the primness and monotony which would have resulted from making the border of even width throughout its entire length.

Such a border admits of picturesque planting. Where it curves farthest into the lawn large-growing shrubs can be located, with perennials on either side and in front. Smaller shrubs can occupy the narrower places, always keeping in mind, however, the gradual increase in height of the material used, as you work back from the street. Low-growing perennials form a pleasing edging for a border of this kind. Care must be taken to keep the sward evenly cut where it meets the open ground

In Making the Border I Indulged in Curves

of the border. A ragged edge of sward detracts greatly from the neat appearance which ought to characterize everything about the home-grounds.

When we first arranged our border, we made the mistake of placing our plants too near the edge, so that, by midsummer when the plants had grown bushy, it was impossible to use the lawn mower to trim the grass along the border's edge. It was necessary to use hand shears to trim it, a very tiresome process. The next year, however, we corrected this mistake, and allowed fully twelve inches between the edge of the sward and the outside row of plants. This arrangement gave ample space for the use of the mower.

We had no trees to set out. Our one old elm was a host in itself. It furnished all the shade we needed, and its great, wide-spreading limbs were so far above us that they offered no obstruction to the winds that scattered coolness about us below. If

we had set out small trees most likely we should have allowed them to form so low a head that after a little our outlook would have been confined to the yard itself. Here is where many home-makers make a great mistake. They want the trees they plant to branch and form a head as soon as possible, forgetful or ignorant of the fact that the tree will keep on growing up, up, up, but that the part of it where the head begins its formation will not go up with the rest of the tree.

As I write I can look out upon a street bordered with maples whose branches are so close to the ground that it is impossible to see into the street below from an upstairs window. Standing on the walk, one feels overpowered by the branches which stretch out on all sides only a little above his head, and he is conscious of an impression that it is necessary to "duck" when he would look the length of the

street. The lower story only of the houses facing this street are to be seen. The city fathers made a grave mistake in letting these trees form a head before they had reached a height of twenty feet or more. But so large and so beautiful have the trees become that no one thinks for a moment of sacrificing any of them. All that can be done now to remedy matters is to thin out some of the branches.

Let me give the amateur gardener this advice: in setting out trees look ahead, and try to get a mental vision of what the sapling you plant to-day will be in fifteen or twenty years. If this were done there would be fewer trees but infinitely better ones about most homes. It is a mistake to think that many are needed. Four or five when well developed will be found vastly more satisfactory than a dozen. None of these should be placed between the house and road, where they will obstruct the view.

Some shade is desirable, but there should not be enough of it to keep out all health-giving sunshine. Nor should there be so thick a growth of branches as to interfere with a free circulation of air.

Our Roses had been planted on the lawn at first, but when changes were made I gave them a place by themselves, at one side of the house and toward the rear. I did this for two reasons: here the ground sloped gently to the south, and here it would be easier for me to give them the special care they required. When out of bloom no variety of Rose is attractive *as a shrub*, and the place it would occupy, if planted in a prominent location, might better be given to shrubs of more attractive habit and foliage. Along the northern and western sides of the space devoted to Roses I arranged to set evergreens to make a shelter for them from the raw, cold winds blowing from these points of the compass in spring.

No plant is more susceptible to injury from draughts and exposure than the Rose, and some kind of shelter should always be given.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SMALL-FRUIT GARDEN

WE were so busy with our flower and vegetable gardens in the first year of our country life that we did not undertake the formation of a garden of small-fruits. The second season we took the matter in hand.

"If you want to grow nice stuff you've got to do a good deal o' gettin' ready for it," said an old farmer who lived near us. "It ain't a thing that can be done offhand, so to speak. Of course almost anything'll grow if you put it into the ground, if it's got roots, but that's no sign it's goin' to do well as a cropper. Some things that we plant'll live along for years at a poor dyin' rate without our payin' much attention to 'em, but if we expect 'em to amount to anything

we've got to take good care of 'em. The ground's got to be right before we can expect 'em to do much. I'd advise you to put this season into gettin' ready for the truck you set out next year. You haven't asked my advice, and you don't have to take it if you don't want to, but I like to help along the gardenin' business because I got my first start in life runnin' a market garden, and I've never got over bein' interested in the gardens of other folks."

I had, by this time, found out that the advice of my old neighbor was of a very practical kind. It was safe to depend on it. Therefore I followed his suggestions and put in what spare time I had on getting the ground into proper shape for the reception of plants the coming season.

First, I had it harrowed to loosen the roots in it—for, as the reader may remember, the ground had been recently cleared of bushes, and was therefore full of as yet un-

decayed rooty matter. Then I hired Tom and Robert to go over it and pick up everything the harrow had loosened and brought to the surface. It wasn't the easiest work for small boys, for some of the roots still clung to the soil and could only be pulled out of it by the application of considerable force. Both the lads were sturdy, determined little fellows, however, and considered themselves equal to the task they had undertaken; they kept at it until they had cleared the garden from refuse and made it ready for the plow.

When the plow went through the soil, more roots came to the surface, and the boys had to go over the ground again. I had the man who operated the plow set it so that it ran deep and brought up a goodly quantity of the under-soil. Then a liberal amount of manure from a very old cow-yard was applied, and after that the harrow was set to work thoroughly to incorporate the manure

with the soil. It was kept going until the ground was as fine and mellow as it was possible to make it to the depth of nearly a foot, thus forming an ideal compost in which it would be an easy matter for small-fruit plants to spread their roots.

"It don't pay to be sparin' of manure," said my old neighbor. "You got a barg'in when you bought up that pile from Thompson, and you can afford to be liberal with it. You needn't be afraid o' gettin' any weeds from it, for it's laid so long that it's fermented, and ev'ry weed-seed in it's been cooked to death. See how it crumbles. You don't have to ask for guano or any o' the other fertilizers so long's you've got all you want o' this to use. You can thank your lucky stars for bein' able to get it."

Mary and I made a list of the things we would plant. We included currants, both red and white, gooseberries, grapes, strawberries, red and black raspberries, and blackberries.

"It's all right, as far's it goes," said our neighbor, when we submitted the list to him for criticism. "You haven't got pie-plant down, nor asparagus, and you can't afford to be without 'em. I tell you what it is, I consider pie-plant better'n bitters to tone a feller up in spring. It's sour, and it takes a lot o' sugar to make it nice and tasty, but that sourness is just what a person needs when spring comes to drive out the biliousness that's got into him over winter. It's worth a hundred per cent. more'n Hood's Sa'sparilla to cure 'that tired feelin'.' Cook it the way my wife does, either as pie-timber, short-cake-fillin', or just plain sass, and I'd sooner have it than strawberry preserves. And it's so all-fired early—that's one o' the good things about it. Knock the head out of a barrel and set it over a plant as soon's the snow goes off, and put some fresh manure round it, and the first thing you know you've got all the pie-stuff you want. It comes in

handy then, as any woman that has to cook for a family'll tell you, for pie-timber don't grow on ev'ry bush in April."

I have to admit that I did not, at that time, have as favorable an opinion regarding the merits of rhubarb as my neighbor had. For some reason my wife had not made much use of it, though it was on sale in the city markets every spring. I had really gotten the impression that most persons used it as a substitute for more desirable things not obtainable when pie-plant was plentiful. But I have to admit that after we began to grow it, and Mary had learned to cook it as our old neighbor's wife cooked it, we changed our opinion, and since then we have come to consider it as a standby rather than a mere substitute. Some experience is needed in order to get the best results from it, Mary says. Most persons use too much water in stewing it. Just enough should be used to prevent it from burning until its

own juices begin to flow. A bit of butter adds greatly to its richness, and a dusting of nutmeg gives it a flavor that is delightful. This Mary learned from the wife of our old neighbor.

When one knows how to use it rhubarb becomes one of the housekeeper's most valuable assets, when considered as "pie-timber," "shortcake-fillin'," or "plain sass." To grow it to perfection it must be given a very deep soil, as much manure as your conscience will admit of, and be prevented from forming seed. We have become so fond of it that in the fall we take up several roots, put them in boxes, and store them in the cellar, where after a little they will throw up stalks whose flavor is more delicate than that of the plant when grown out-of-doors.

We set our small-fruit plants out in rows so that the cultivator could be used between them. The grapes were given an outside row, where a permanent trellis could be con-

structed for them without its interfering with any of the other plants.

Our strawberries were set in rows four feet apart. This seemed a waste of ground, but our old neighbor—whose advice we followed in this as in other things—declared that it was the best plan *he'd* ever tried, and you couldn't coax him to try any other. His idea was to train the runners of the plants into the space between the rows. As soon as the young plants had become thoroughly rooted there, he would run a spade between them and the old plants, thus separating the young ones from the old ones and establishing them on their own footing—or rooting. After fruiting, the old plants would be dug up, and into the rows they had occupied this season, runners from the newly established rows would be trained next season, thus securing a new set of plants for each season's bearing.

"It's less work than to make a new bed

every year," he said. "Just keep the ground rich, an' let the plants do their own settin'-out. There ain't any sense in tearin' up everything every year, as some folks do. If you can save yourself work, do it."

Our asparagus was set in rows at one side of the garden where it would not be subject to disturbance each season. In setting this most delicious vegetable I followed my neighbor's advice and made the soil mellow to the depth of two feet, using a good deal of manure in it. I bought two-year-old plants, and set them two feet apart in the row, and there was space enough between rows to admit of using the garden cultivator with ease. If one wants fine asparagus he must manure it well every spring, and keep weeds away from it. I covered mine with coarse litter in fall, and forked this into the soil in spring. As this litter came from a neighbor's barnyard and contained a good deal of rich manure I did not find it necessary to make use

of any other fertilizer. We cut from our plants each season, until the early peas were ready for use. By all means have an asparagus plantation if you have the space. It has health-giving qualities that no other vegetable possesses, it is ready for use early in the season, and a bed of it, once established, is good for a lifetime if given proper care.

I cannot urge upon the home-maker too strongly the importance of a good collection of small-fruit. The woman who is fortunate enough to have such a collection at her disposal is never at a loss, during the season, for material with which to vary the daily bill of fare in such a manner as to make monotony out of the question. Almost all persons have a liking for these fruits, and they can only be had in perfection when freshly gathered. Such a garden is second in value only to a vegetable garden. Every home should be well supplied with the products of both.

Not only does the small-fruit garden furnish delightful accompaniments for the heavier viands of the home table in summer, but from it the housewife can put away for winter use almost everything that grows in it. No home that aims to live up to its privileges can afford to be without a cellar well stocked with the fruitage of the garden.

CHAPTER XIV

WE GO IN FOR POULTRY

ONE day Mary made the declaration that we were not taking proper advantage of the situation. We had no hens; and in her opinion no farm, even if it was on a small scale, was what it ought to be if the owner of it had to buy eggs. Why couldn't we raise chickens as well as other folks, and produce our own eggs?

"Why not, indeed?" said I. "I wonder that you haven't thought of it before."

The fact that there had been so much else to think of explains our oversight of so important a matter.

Now, I had never taken any interest in poultry-keeping. I had noticed poultry departments in nearly all the farm-papers that came under my observation; but, until the

time the poultry question came up for consideration, I had never read an article in any of them. Therefore I felt very much like the new scholar at school who has to begin with the A B C's when he starts out to gain an education.

I looked through the back numbers of some of the farm-papers and found quite a good deal of interesting matter pertaining to chicken-growing and egg-production, but none of the writers of the articles seemed to think it worth while to deal with the rudimentary facts which a beginner in the poultry-business ought, it seemed to me, to understand quite clearly before making a venture.

"I'll ask Hayes about it," I said. "I remember, now, that he keeps hens. He's a pretty level-headed fellow, and what he has to say about the business will bear a good deal of weight."

Accordingly Hayes was consulted.

"I'm glad you didn't undertake to raise chickens on the strength of what the books say about it," he said. "Of course you can get a good deal of useful information from them, but most of the poultry-books I have read seem to have been written to exploit some pet theory of the author's, or to boom some particular breed that the writer has to sell, or a 'new and greatly improved incubator.' I have satisfied myself that the best way to be successful with poultry is to start in with a few hens, give them good care and comfortable quarters, and—keep both eyes open. By that I mean that one should study the matter in a practical way by familiarizing himself with the habits and requirements of his fowls, and observe the effects of different kinds of food on them.

"All these things have to be learned in the school of experience. If you place your dependence wholly on books you'll get so muddled up over breeds, and houses, and

rations, and various other matters that you'll get disgusted with the whole thing, and be inclined to give it up before you've fairly gotten under way with it. I shouldn't advise anybody to wait until he has absorbed all the knowledge supposed to be contained in the poultry-books before beginning the poultry-business, for the more knowledge one has of that kind the poorer his chances of success. He knows so much, you see—or *thinks* he does—that he isn't practical. Practical is just what a man must be in order to succeed with poultry. It's the simplest thing in the world to make the right start. Get your hens, build a house for them, and learn what is necessary to know as you go along."

This seemed to me to be advice of a practical character, and on the strength of it I then and there bargained with Hayes for a dozen hens.

"Come and look my houses over before you build," he said. "They wouldn't pass

muster with the men who raise poultry on what they call a scientific basis, but I don't see that the scientific people get any more eggs or better chickens from their 'improved methods' than I do from mine. It's eggs and chickens that we're after, and the simplest way in which we can get them is the way I should advise you or any one else to follow."

I looked his poultry-houses over. They were plain and unpretentious buildings, but they seemed to be admirably adapted to the purposes for which they were made. There was a good-sized yard or runway in front of each, fenced in with wire netting. Provision had been made for enclosing with glass that portion of the yard abutting on the houses. Here they were fed, and here, in winter, they could get plenty of exercise by scratching among the leaves and straw that covered the ground in which their food was scattered. Provision had also been made for dust-baths.

The houses were snugly built, and the inside walls were lined with tarred sheathing paper. This, Hayes explained, added greatly to their warmth, and the smell of the tar helped to keep the place free from lice. Twice during the season the houses were given a thorough coat of whitewash in which Nicoticide was freely used. The lime-wash, combined with the insecticide, was sure death to every insect with which it came in contact.

"You must keep your fowls free from lice if you want them to lay well," Hayes said. "This you can easily do by using plenty of lime and insecticide, and giving them road-dust to wallow in. In summer they must be given the free run of the yard. It is a good plan to have a yard at the rear of the houses, into which they can be turned when the front yard has been scratched over so thoroughly that there's nothing green left in it. The houses should be so arranged that they can be easily cleaned, and they should

be given attention in this respect regularly. I have come to the conclusion that half the sickness which prevails among poultry could be prevented if the houses were cleaned once a week, and proper food was given."

"What food do you advise?" I asked.

"I feed corn and wheat mixed as a regular ration," Hayes replied, "and vary it with scraps from the kitchen and all the vegetable matter that accumulates there. I see that they get fresh water daily, that their drinking-vessels are never allowed to get foul, and that two or three times a week, in winter, they get a hot meal made by cooking coarsely cracked corn until it is quite tender.

"Give this kind of treatment and you'll be likely to get all the eggs you want, provided the houses are as warm as they ought to be. If they are not, the fault is yours, for by building them of good lumber and making liberal use of sheathing paper you can keep out cold very effectually in the severest

weather. That part of the houses fronting sunward should contain enough glass to admit a large amount of sunshine in winter. My nests are made in boxes about a foot and a half deep and a foot and a half square. A hen wants ample room to turn around in. In the bottom of the boxes I put four or five inches of tobacco stems to discourage insects from locating there. On top of this I put hay or straw which the hen arranges according to her idea of what a nest should be. Once every month these boxes are emptied and filled with new material. I have been quite as successful with my poultry as I expected to be, and a large share of this success I believe to be directly attributable to cleanliness. A dozen hens will require a house about eight feet square. If more than a dozen are to be kept I should build a larger house and divide it into compartments with wire netting or sheathing paper tacked to a framework of lath. At all seasons keep each

room well supplied with coarse sand or gravel. Cover the floor with it, but remove it before it becomes foul with droppings.

"As to breeds," Hayes continued, "one man has fairly good luck with a certain kind, and straightway he declares that it's the only breed worth keeping. Another man tries another breed, and if he gets good results from it he will tell you that you are foolish if you don't confine your selection to the same kind. The fact is, there are many excellent breeds on the market, but which is the best for general purposes it is impossible to say. The amateur poultry-keeper should try some reliable breed and be governed largely by his experience with it. If one gets a breed that lays well, and grows to a good size, and makes good eating, he will do well to stick to it. It doesn't pay to make frequent changes."

We followed our neighbor's advice, and have been highly pleased with the result of

our venture in poultry-keeping. We have all the eggs we want, summer and winter, and sometimes some to sell. A chicken dinner once a week, except during the summer when the hens are taking care of their chicks, has become a custom with us. We really do not care for them at this season, as our table is bountifully supplied with vegetables from our garden.

Many and fervid have been the congratulations of our friends who have come out from the city to visit us and have enjoyed some of our tender and tasty chickens, prepared as Mary knows how to prepare them. While the raising of chickens undoubtedly entails a certain amount of care, the results repay one for all the time and trouble expended.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD

We had seemed to take it for granted, before settling in the country, that our life there would be in some degree a form of isolation from society, a sort of "I-am-monarch-of-all-I-survey" existence. How we came to form the opinion that we should practically be without neighbors I do not know. I presume it was because our first visit to the place was so brief that we did not have time to look about and discover how many new homes had recently been built there.

We had really considered ourselves as pioneers, but it did not take us long to find out our mistake. Others who had tired of the city, and had despaired of ever being able to have a home of their own there, had pre-

ceded us, and we soon found that we had plenty of neighbors.

True, society was on a sort of unsettled basis—in the formative period, one might say—and no one laid stress on formality. On that account we enjoyed the new life all the more. None of us felt any inclination to stand on ceremony or imitate the "functions" of the city. We had come to the country because it afforded so decided a change from the old way of living that it was restful, and free from the unpleasant features of a working-man's life in the city, where he cannot share in the pleasures of the rich, and does not care to ally himself with the lower classes whose recreations have so many objectionable features connected with them.

In our new neighborhood there were no class distinctions. None of us had wealth to boast of. We were all working people together, and on this basis of equality society built itself after a free-and-easy fashion that

had something delightful about it because it was honest, and we who belonged to it felt free to live the simple life unmindful of the criticisms of those whose lives were different from ours.

There was a small church in which we all worshiped together, unmindful of creed or denomination. It had a young minister who was in earnest in everything he said and did, and this quality made up for lack of exceptional ability. We soon grew to have a genuine respect for him, and we stood by him loyally from the first. Some of us had a little knowledge of music, and our volunteer choir added much to the interest of the services. Almost every resident of the neighborhood came to church regularly each Sunday morning in a spirit of comradeship, and because of a desire to create and uphold a community interest in everything that had a tendency to benefit and uplift.

There were frequent socials, informal, but

really far more enjoyable than the average city entertainment of similar character. One of the chief charms of the new life was the naturalness of it, as opposed to the artificiality of life in the city, where, perhaps unconsciously, the lower classes feel constrained to imitate those above them in wealth and social position.

There was a larger and much better equipped schoolhouse than is generally found in a small country neighborhood. Late comers from the city had brought with them modern ideas of scholastic work, and fortunately they had succeeded in infusing some of these ideas into the minds of the older residents. So when the time came to replace the old school building with a new one, a spirit of progress was in control, and the new building was one that would have done credit to a much larger place.

"We don't want to be obliged to send our children to the city for an education," was

the sentiment of the community. "That's why we go in for a good school at home."

I think that ours was one of the first rural communities to act on the social-center idea. All of our larger gatherings were held at the schoolhouse, primarily because there was no other place for them, and later on because it seemed as if that was the proper place for all meetings of a character designed to interest the ordinary country neighborhood.

We did not depend wholly on ourselves for amusement. Most of the men in the community were workers in the city, and we did not feel, when night came, like amusing others so much as like being amused. So we frequently had men and women from the city to give us an evening's entertainment. In the second year of our country life we arranged with a lyceum bureau for a regular course of entertainments of a varied character. In this way we kept ourselves in touch with the outside world, and demonstrated

the fact that though one may live in the country he can keep up with the march of new ideas quite as well as the resident of the city can, if the disposition to do so exists. There may be more opportunities for a broader education in the city, but, so far as my experience goes, comparatively few take advantage of them. In the country community it is very different. Because there are fewer attractions we make better use of those which come our way.

Another peculiarity of country life is the genuine neighborliness it develops. Because of its freedon from the constraints of what is called "society," we get together in such informal ways that we show ourselves to each other *as we are*, and this in itself is sure to lead to closer intimacy and stronger friendships. When we free ourselves from the restraint of artificiality we put ourselves in a position to let the best that is in us come to the surface, and when that takes

place we are pretty sure to win the regard of those with whom we come into contact, for there is some good in all of us. But so many of us strive to hide our good qualities that we are often thought to be without any. Country life, unhampered by conventionality, does much to counteract this tendency. It is far easier to get—and to stay—on friendly terms with other people in the country than in the city. Perhaps this is because of greater leisure, perhaps because we feel the need of something to take the place of city excitement, and perhaps because God meant the country for real neighborliness and infused into it an influence that stimulates comradeship. This makes it the most natural thing in the world for us to meet a neighbor with a "How are you, old fellow?" instead of the touch-and-go nod which characterizes the urban greeting.

In the city we know so little of even our next-door neighbors that we seldom think

about them. We are reminded of their existence only when we happen to see them. There may be birth and death in the family, but we have no share in its pleasures or its sorrows. In the country I believe we are more like what God intended us to be—members of a great family. One of the most delightful features of country life is the way in which it binds the community together because we are all interested in each others' welfare.

"I never supposed that I'd know any of the people here intimately," said my wife to me one day, "but—we're all friends together."

That's one of the charming features of country life—all friends together!

CHAPTER XVI

OUR SLEEPING-PORCH

One day I brought home a magazine in which my wife found an article that greatly interested her. It was about outdoor sleeping.

"I've been thinking for some time that it would be a good plan to make an outdoor sleeping-porch for the boys," she said.

"Ah,—going in for more improvements," said I. "Improvement seems to be the order of the day just now. Last week it was a hen-house. Now it's a sleeping-porch."

"Well, we had to have a hen-house if we proposed keeping chickens, didn't we?" responded Mary. "I judge you were as much interested in that as I was. But don't you think our boys and their interests ought to

be considered quite as much as home economics? Of course you do. If you'll read this article you'll have to admit that it contains a whole lot of truth and good sense. It's written by a man who knows what he's talking about. He says—and I think it stands to reason that he's right about it—that growing children get more benefit from sleeping out-of-doors than grown people do. That's because it comes at a time when they are in a condition to make better use of fresh air than they are after they're grown up, I suppose. Anyway, I'd like to have such a place for Tom and Robert. It wouldn't cost a great deal, would it?"

"That depends," I answered. "But I don't see where we could make such a room. There doesn't seem to be any place for it."

"*I* know where we could make it," said my wife. "I've got it all thought out. There's the south veranda. Why couldn't we screen it in, and put up some canvas

curtains to use in stormy weather, and make just a splendid sleeping-place for the boys out of it? We've got all the veranda we need in front of the house. We could spare the south part as well as not."

"I'll think it over," I promised.

I did so. But the more I thought about it the less was I attracted by the idea of converting the south veranda into a sleeping-room. Instead of making one just for the boys, it seemed as if we might better make one for the whole family. Besides, I didn't like the idea of a sleeping-porch on the ground floor. It seemed too public. And then such a room ought to be high enough above the ground to admit of a freer circulation of air than is generally found close to the soil.

One day a brilliant idea came to me. Why not build a sleeping-porch on the south side of the house by running out an extension over the veranda below? That

would enable me to gratify my wife's desire for an outdoor bedroom, and it would make it possible for me to put the south veranda to a use of which I knew she would enthusiastically approve when I told her about it. This idea, about which I am not going to tell you just yet, sprang into existence, full fledged, as I looked the south veranda over when considering the advisability of making a sleeping-room out of it.

When I explained to Mary what I considered the advantages of an up-stairs sleeping-porch, she fully agreed with me.

"That's just where I'd like to have it," she said. "But I didn't say so because I thought it would cost more than you would think we could afford."

So it was settled where the sleeping-porch was to be located, and the next week the carpenter began work on it. By extending it over the veranda below it would give us a room twelve feet wide and twenty feet long

—quite large enough to accommodate two beds. It would be open to the air on one side and at both ends, thus affording free circulation at all times.

"Canvas curtains that can be rolled up to the ceiling when we don't need them will keep out rain," said I, quoting one of Mary's arguments in favor of the plan.

"And snow, too," said she. "For we'll sleep out there in winter. We won't mind the cold when we get used to it."

"Possibly not," said I, "if we don't die in getting used to it." I had an idea that in zero weather I'd prefer a snug room, with a suggestion of furnace heat in it, but I didn't want to throw cold water on my wife's enthusiasm.

It was not long before the porch was completed, and the first night we used it the boys had an immense amount of fun out of the novel experience of "going to bed out-of-doors."

As a matter of fact, I became as enthusiastic an advocate of outdoor sleeping as my wife after I'd tried it. Often, when we slept in the ordinary bedroom, I awoke in the morning with a dull, disagreeable headache. "A cold in the head" we called it, or "catarrh." But after we began to sleep in the open air this feeling disappeared, and each morning found me with a head as clear as a bell. We got so that we did not mind wind or cold weather.

The secret of comfort in these outdoor sleeping-rooms in the coldest of weather is the use of covering enough to keep one's body warm. As long as there is a pleasant sensation of warmth there, let the winds blow and the storms howl—there's nothing to fear. In fact, there is real pleasure in listening to wind and rain when you are snugly tucked in bed without a suggestion of chill, except possibly in nose or cheek. The warm blood rapidly coursing through

your veins will soon bring to your face all the protection it needs against cold unless in extra severe weather. Then you can snuggle down under the bed-covering, as a child does, and defy the elements to do their worst.

So satisfactory has been our experience in sleeping out-of-doors, summer and winter, that I feel justified in advising every one who can possibly do so to "go and do likewise." I feel confident that fresh air, in unlimited quantities, will do away with a good many doctor's bills, and that what was considered good health before will have a greater zest and give us a keener sense of well-being after we have put ourselves in closer touch with nature by sleeping out-of-doors.

CHAPTER XVII

OUR PLANT-ROOM

I HAVE hinted at a plan that suggested itself to me while the sleeping-porch question was under consideration. It had to do with the south veranda.

At the time of building the house, it seemed as if we must have had the veranda fever, and that the attack was a severe one; otherwise we should not have run one across both side and end of the house, for a family like ours had no need of so much veranda space. That portion across the front of the house was twelve feet wide and twenty feet long,—quite large enough to hang a hammock in, and accommodate a lounge, table, and two or three comfortable chairs. It was large enough, too, to serve as an eating-room whenever the head of the family saw fit to

put it to that use. This being the case, I argued, why should we not make that portion of the veranda at the south of the house into something else if, by so doing, we could add another attractive feature to the home?

My idea was to make a plant-room of it.

My wife declared she couldn't keep house without plants. To her they were not luxuries, but absolute necessities. In winter they made her think of summer, and she had become so used to their company that she would as soon think of giving up the children as of parting with them. True, they blossomed only at times. That is, *some* of them did. But there was about most of them that discouraged look common to plants grown in the living-room. Their appearance gave one to understand that their intentions were of the best, but, owing to circumstances over which they had no control, they found it difficult to carry those intentions to a successful issue.

Some of them grew so fast in the over-stimulating atmosphere of the living-room that what nature had intended for a miniature shrub showed a decided tendency to turn into a vine. Others had been able to retain only leaves enough to cover a part of their nakedness, and as a consequence they were more noticeable for stalk than for foliage. Some of them stubbornly refused to grow, and as stubbornly refused to die. But Mary had become so attached to the poor things that she kept them on, year after year, hoping that some day they might take a start and astonish us by developing into something to be proud of. Up to date, however, this had never happened, and there was little likelihood of its ever coming to pass.

I knew very well that plants in a living-room, heated by a furnace, could not be expected to do well. There are several reasons for this. First, furnace heat, without

something to add moisture to it, is too dry to encourage satisfactory plant-growth, and it seems impossible to add the necessary degree of moisture in the living-room. Then the temperature of the living-room is almost invariably too high for plant-health. We have any amount of theories as to its regulation, but we seldom live up to them. We allow our rooms to become heated to a degree that burns almost all of the oxygen out of the air, thus making it unfit for plants to breathe. Plants grown under such conditions are generally infested with insects of various kinds. These enemies like the heat and the absence of moisture which prevails, and as a natural result the plants they prey upon are so enfeebled that many of them die as soon as winter sets in, and the supply of fresh air is shut off. Not one person in a hundred succeeds in growing plants satisfactorily under these conditions. If one *does* succeed it is because some fortunate combi-

nation of circumstances interferes with the usual order of things.

Now, I love flowers quite as well as my wife does, and this explains how the idea came to me to make the south veranda over into a plant-room.

I thought the matter over well before suggesting it to Mary. I wasn't quite sure as to how such a room as I had in mind could be heated satisfactorily in winter. So I went to a greenhouse man in the city, and asked his opinion. That would decide the matter one way or the other.

"If you've got a furnace that's large enough to stand another pipe, you'll have no difficulty in warming the room," he said. "But it won't be ideal heat for plants, by any means, just as it comes from the furnace. If you are willing, however, to give your plants a good deal of attention you can, in a great measure, overcome that objection. It can be done by using a good deal of water

in the plant-room. That will counteract the effect of dry heat to such an extent that really fine flowers of the more robust kinds can be grown in it. You can shower the plants daily, and keep water constantly evaporating on the register. You must give your plants as much fresh air as possible, whenever the weather will admit of it. It may be some trouble to do all this, but if you love flowers you will be willing to give them the care they require. It will be necessary to keep up the treatment the year round. Most persons who begin it go by spurts. They do well for a time, and then neglect their plants, and in a very short time all the good that has been done is undone. If you think you can keep up the treatment outlined I should advise you to go ahead with your idea."

That night I began a conversation that would lead up to the subject in mind by looking at my wife's window-garden.

"Seems to me your plants aren't looking as well as usual," I said.

"They aren't doing very well," admitted Mary. "I think they need repotting."

"They need a dose of vitality," I said. "They're all run down, and some of them are evidently going into a decline. Don't you think they'd do a great deal better if they had a room all to themselves—a room made on purpose for them?"

"Of course," answered Mary. "But we haven't such a room, so what's the use of thinking about it? I'll take as good care of them as I can, and that's all I *can* do."

"But we might have a room expressly for them without a great deal of trouble," I said.

My wife began to look interested. "What kind of an idea has got into your head now?" she asked.

"I've been thinking that we might enclose the south veranda with glass and make a plant-room out of it," I answered.

"That would be just splendid," cried Mary. "That's what I've always wanted but never expected to have. You're really in earnest?"

"Never more so," I replied. Then I proceeded to put the details of my plan before her.

Before we got through talking the matter over, both of us could see plants growing in the south veranda—plants of all kinds—fine, healthy plants, every one of them in luxuriant bloom, and the place was a bit of earthly Paradise before our mental vision. Mary was so excited over the picture that she declared she wouldn't be able to sleep a wink that night.

"We have a pleasant home now," she said, "so pleasant that I've thought more than once since we came to live in it that it was next thing to perfection. But it'll be so much pleasanter when we get the plant-room that I don't believe I shall be able to appreciate it as I ought to. I don't see what

more can be done to improve it. That'll be absolutely the climax. It *will* be perfect then."

"There's no such thing as perfection," I said. "There is always a chance for improvement. But I think we'll be satisfied to let things remain as they are, for a time at least, after we get the plant-room."

I had a carpenter come and look the veranda over.

"It won't be much of a job to fill in between the posts with sashes," he said. "That's about all that needs to be done. The sashes will have to be made to order, but that won't take long. I'd advise double-strength glass, in large panes. You want as little obstruction to the light as possible, and the fewer sash-bars you have the better. While you're about it, I'd order storm-sashes for winter use. You might as well get all the sashes you're going to need at the same time. You'll get them a little cheaper, and when

the time comes that storm-sashes are needed you'll have them on hand. The floor's all right as it is, if you don't care to go to the expense of a new one, but I'd advise one of cement. You know you're going to use a good deal of water in the room when it's filled with plants, and a board floor won't last long where there's constant moisture. A cement floor could be put in over the present floor, without much trouble. It would never rot, and it would be a good deal easier to keep clean than a wooden floor."

"A cement floor we'll have, then," I said. "While we're about it we might as well go in for the best we can afford. It isn't at all likely that we'll build plant-rooms every year, therefore we'll make this one substantial enough to last till we're able to afford a conservatory."

The carpenter made measurements for the sashes required and sent off his order that day.

The next day a furnace-man came out and made arrangements for adding another pipe to the furnace through which heat could be delivered to the plant-room.

When the sashes came it did not take long to put them in place.

Then we had part of the house-wall between what had been the south veranda and the living-room cut away in such a manner as to give a wide opening between the two rooms. My plan was to have the plants in view at all times, thus making it unnecessary to make special trips to the plant-room to enjoy the flowers we so confidently expected to have. The opening was fitted with glazed doors. These, when closed, would enable us to keep the air in the plant-room sufficiently moist, at all times, to meet the requirements of the plants, and would keep out the dust, and yet they would not obstruct the view. At each end of the room ventilators were arranged for.

Though the place was lacking in many of the conveniences of a greenhouse, it was a great improvement in all ways on a bay-window that would have cost several times as much, and would hold only a fraction of the plants that this room could accommodate. I calculated that we could grow at least a hundred good-sized plants without the least crowding, and by using shelves and brackets we could enlarge the number whenever we felt like doing so. One of the most attractive features about the undertaking was the fact that the living-room's windows would no longer be given up to plants that obstructed the outlook and took up a good deal of space that might better be used for other purposes.

"Oh, isn't it just lovely?" said Mary, ecstatically, as she looked it over after the carpenter had completed his work. "Now I can have *big* plants, and give them all the room they want to spread themselves in. I'll

have Oleanders that reach clear to the ceiling, and Palms that have a chance to show their beauty without being elbowed by their neighbors, and it'll be just like a glimpse of summer to peep inside it when the snow's three feet deep outside. It's a real conservatory on a small scale."

"But let's not call it that," I said. "I like the simple name of plant-room better."

"All right—plant-room it shall be," assented Mary. "I don't care what name it goes by so long as we have it."

We moved our plants into it, and had a good laugh over the effect. They seemed lost in it.

"Poor things, they look lonesome," said Mary. "But they'll have plenty of company before winter."

Then began a campaign of plant-collecting. Some of our neighbors had more than they had room for, and my wife was glad to take them off their hands. Others gave her

"slips" without number. These she inserted in shallow pans of coarse sand, which was kept moist. In a week or ten days most of them began to grow, and by that we knew that they had formed roots. Then we took them out of the sand and put them into little pots filled with mellow loam. After they had filled these pots with roots, they were shifted to larger pots, and later on they were given another shift to the pots in which they were expected to remain until another season.

Occasionally I brought home a plant whose beauty, as displayed in the florist's window, challenged my admiration. Among them were Azaleas, well set with buds for winter bloom, and Easter Lilies that the greenhouse-men had started into growth for flowering at Easter-time, and cunning little baby Primroses that had the charm of the wildwood about them. The result was that, while the room was not full by any means

when winter came, it began to look like what we had in mind.

"It's so easy to take care of them now," said Mary. "One doesn't have to think of curtains and rugs in watering them. And spraying them every day not only keeps them clean, but makes it so unpleasant for the spiders and aphides that I don't think I'm going to have any more trouble with the pests. Don't you see how much healthier they look than they used to? With the ventilators open, they get all the fresh air they want, and I really believe it does them as much good as it does us to get out of a stuffy, hot room in winter time. I wonder why we didn't plan for such a room when we built the house!"

"Because we wanted home-making to be an evolutionary process," I answered. "That's one of the delightful things about it. There's always some change, some improvement, to be made that keeps us looking

forward with the eagerness of the small boy anticipating the Fourth of July."

Of course not all persons care enough for flowers in the house to go to the expense of making a room especially for them. But to those who *do* I have this advice to offer: have a room similar to the one I have described, even if, in order to have it, you must sacrifice something. No one has any idea of the pleasure it will afford the flower-lover, or of what it will do to make the home attractive, until it has been made a feature of the place. Looked at from the dollars-and-cents point of view it may not be a paying investment, but when considered from the standpoint of pure enjoyment I do not hesitate to make the assertion that in no other way will the expenditure of the same amount of money yield such generous returns.

A home without flowers is a home that fails to realize all its possibilities. Flowers

have a refining influence that we cannot afford to ignore; about them there is something hardly explainable that fits in with the home-idea, and is powerful for good in its effect on the minds of children who are brought up in their companionship. I feel quite sure that no one who has given the matter thoughtful consideration will take issue with me on this point. I should be glad to see flowers in the windows of every home, for their presence there would indicate a culture and refinement that is seldom seen where flowers are not.

CHAPTER XVIII

FLOWERS FOR THE PLANT-ROOM

WHAT flowers should I advise as best adapted to culture in such a room as I have described?

First on the list I would name the Geranium. This is a plant that deserves especial attention because of its beauty, its ease of culture, its freedom of bloom, and its wide range of color. From pure white it runs to intense crimson and brilliant scarlet, and in between these colors are vivid carmines, and delicate pinks and salmons, thus making the list of desirable varieties so large that almost every taste can find the color that suits it best.

I should always grow the single varieties. They will be found far more satisfactory than the double ones, especially for winter flowering.

Most persons form their opinion concerning the Geranium from the small specimens they see in house windows. These afford their owners much pleasure, but what they are capable of doing there is merely a suggestion of the satisfaction that large plants will give. We never see any large ones in the ordinary window for there is no room for them there, but in a plant-room where they can be given ample room for development they grow to a height of five and six feet, with many branches, and every branch bears its truss of bloom. The little plant hints at what it can do with age, and the large two- or three-year-old plant convinces you that the person who tells you that you must start Geraniums every year, in order to succeed with them, doesn't know what he is talking about. The fact is, a Geranium is not at its best until it is two or three years old. After having blossomed all winter it can be cut back sharply in summer and

made to renew its growth, and this cutting back of the larger branches results in the production of a greater number, so that old plants become a compact mass of branches, each one a flowering point.

I should advise at least a dozen varieties of the flowering sorts, and a plant of the Rose Geranium for its sweet-scented foliage.

The Abutilon, more commonly known as Flowering Maple because of the resemblance of its foliage to that of our native Maple, is another plant of easy culture. Its pendulous, bell-shaped flowers are borne freely and almost constantly. In color they range from white to dark crimson, with intermediate shades of rose and orange. This plant is well adapted to plant-room culture where something in the form of a miniature tree is desirable in filling the upper part of the room. To force it to take on a tree-shape, train it to a single stalk until it reaches the height where you want the head to form.

Then pinch off the top of it. Branches will soon start below. Allow only those to grow which are at the top of the stalk. There ought to be at least half a dozen, starting from this point, in order to get a good foundation for the head of the tree. These will produce side-branches after a little, and the result will be a compact growth thickly set with attractive foliage, beneath which the pendant blossoms will display themselves most effectively.

The Oleander is a very desirable plant for rooms of this kind, because of its height. But it must be kept from blossoming in summer. This can be done by cutting away all buds that form, and giving only enough water to prevent it from dropping its leaves. When taken into the house in fall, give it more water, and it will soon start into growth, and a little later flowers will be produced.

Begonias will do well also. Some varie-

Ferns Will Play an Important Part in the Plant-room

ties you will grow for their beautiful foliage, others for their flowers. This family of plants should be given a light, spongy soil, with a good deal of fibrous matter in it.

Ferns will play an important part in these collections. Especially such varieties as the Boston Fern, with its long, drooping fronds, Whitmanii, with its plumy foliage, and Croweanum, the only member of the Adiantum family that I can recommend for amateur culture. These can be given places in the shaded portions of the room, where they will do better than when exposed to full sunshine. Ferns, like Begonias, like a soil that contains a good deal of fibrous matter.

For fall flowering there should be at least a dozen varieties of Chrysanthemum—white, yellow, and pink. After they have completed their flowering period, cut away all the old top and put the plants in the cellar to stay through the winter. In spring they

will send up many shoots from the old roots, as soon as they are brought to the light, and from these one can get all the plants he wants for next fall's use. Cut away a sprout with a bit of root attached, put it in a little pot filled with moderately rich soil, and allow it to fill this pot with roots before shifting it to a larger pot. Shift from time to time until you have the plant in an eight or nine-inch pot. That will be large enough for it to bloom in. Keep the soil quite rich, and use water liberally. To grow this plant well, it must be kept going ahead steadily. Allow it to become checked in its development by not shifting at the proper time, or by not giving it as much water as it requires in summer, and the probabilities are that you will get but few flowers from it, and those will be inferior.

For summer flowering there should be Fuchsias in large variety. They will bloom until late September. Then let them get

rather dry at the roots. In October or November, put them in the cellar along with the Chrysanthemums. Give these plants a soil of rich loam, water well at the root, and shower all over at least twice a week. Oftener would suit the plant better, as it is almost as fond of water on its foliage as at the root. In spring, when the plants are brought from the cellar, cut them back at least half, repot, and start them into growth for another season's work.

Tuberose Begonias and Gloxinias are excellent summer bloomers. They should be dried off in October, or as soon as their foliage begins to turn yellow. When the last leaves have ripened and fallen off, dig up the tubers, wrap them in paper, and store in a frost-proof place over winter. In spring plant them in loamy soil, one to each six-inch pot.

The only Roses I dare recommend for amateur culture in a plant-room are Queen's

Scarlet, Agrippina, Gruss, Teiplitz, and Hermosa. Give these varieties a soil that will be firm about their roots, and make it very rich. Cut them back frequently to encourage the production of new branches. Flowers will be borne on new growth only, therefore the importance of keeping the plants growing all through the flowering season will be readily understood. This can only be done by frequent pruning and generous feeding.

Palms and Ficus, with their fine foliage and stately habit, will do as much to make the plant-room attractive as any flowering plant.

For vines I should advise English Ivy, Madeira Vine, and Hoya.

For hanging plants Othonna, Lysimachia, Moneywort, Tradescantia, Saxifrage, and Asparagus Sprengeeri.

For plants that can be used for table decoration, as occasion may require, the most

satisfactory will be Asparagus Plumosus Nanus, Jerusalem Cherry, Primula Obconica, and small specimens of Rex Begonias.

Other plants adapted to amateur culture are Oxalis, white, pink and yellow; Cinerarias, Carnations, Hydrangeas, Plumbagoes, and the Calla. The Cineraria can be bought from a florist in fall, all ready to bloom.

It must be understood that the plants I have mentioned are not all that are desirable. The list I have given is intended as a sort of guide for the person whose knowledge of plants is limited, but who desires to make a collection of kinds with which he would be most likely to succeed. Grow these well, and you will be warranted in adding to them kinds which call for more care and skill. My advice here is the same as that given in the chapter on shrubs, perennials, and annuals—better a few kinds, well grown, than many of an inferior character.

So much has been said of late, in books

and floricultural articles in the magazines about drainage and watering that it hardly seems necessary to repeat the formula here. But there can be no harm in doing so, and possibly some reader of this book may see it for the first time. As to drainage: supply all pots larger than four inches with at least an inch of broken pottery, brick or anything that will not decay easily, taking care that the small pieces of it do not get into the hole in the bottom of the pot and close it, thus preventing surplus water from draining out of the soil above, and making its escape.

As to watering, use enough water each time to saturate all the soil in the pot. You can tell about this by giving so much that a little will run off through the hole in the bottom of the pot. Then wait until the surface of the soil takes on a dry look again before applying more. Of course this is not to be considered as a rule that is not subject to modification. It is rather a general rule,

subject to such changes as may seem necessary to the plant-owner who has become familiar with the habits and peculiarities of the plants he or she cultivates.

Shower your plants frequently. You should have a hand-sprayer for this purpose. Apply water to the under side of the foliage, for there is where the red spider will attempt to establish himself. If any insects put in an appearance, be prompt and thorough in the use of the insecticide spoken of in a preceding chapter. Apply fertilizers only when the plant is making active growth or beginning to do so—never when it is at a standstill. Dormant plants are not in a condition to make use of a rich food, and will be injured rather than benefited by their application. Keep this in mind.

Give fresh air daily in pleasant weather. The plants cannot get too much of it.

Turn them about at least once a week, in order to secure a symmetrical development.

Give all sides of them an equal chance at the light.

Stir the soil frequently to prevent its getting crusted over; also to allow air to get to the roots of the plant.

Allow your plants to have a resting-spell some time during the year. You ought not to expect them to keep on growing and blooming the year round. They won't do it. Kinds which you want to bloom in winter should take their rest in summer. Withhold a full supply of water. Cut them back sharply. Do not encourage much growth until September or October. Then apply more water. As soon as they get actively to work, use a good fertilizer,—weak at first, increasing in strength in proportion to the plant's growth,—and repot if more root-room is required. I do not advise frequent repotting, however. If you supply a plant with food by means of a fertilizer, it will not require shifting oftener than

once a year, and even then it may be better to remove a portion of the upper soil and fill in with fresh than to shift the plant and disturb its roots in the operation.

If you have a cement floor in your plant-room, some provision should be made for the escape of water. None was made in *our* room at the time it was built, but I had a hole cut in the cement later on, through which the water could run off. This hole was fitted with a rubber plug that closed it snugly, and kept out cold. Unless some provision is made for the escape of surplus water, the floor of such a room will always be in a slippery condition, and quite likely dirty, because it is not an easy matter to keep it clean unless there is some way of flushing it, as more or less soil will always fall from the pots.

As to soil to use: any good loam will answer for the majority of plants. Very fine-rooted ones like wood's-earth—leaf-

mold—mixed with sharp sand. If this is not obtainable, turn over sward in the roadside, and scrape away that part of it which is full of tiny grass-roots. This is the best substitute I know of for genuine leaf-mold. Indeed, it is practically the same thing, being made up largely of vegetable matter.

CHAPTER XIX

VINES AND THE HOUSE BORDER

At the time we set out our shrubs and perennials we planted three vines about the house. One was an Ampelopsis or American Ivy, one was a Clematis Paniculata, and the other was a Dorothy Perkins Rose.

The Ampelopsis was to be trained to the second story. The Clematis was to shade the eastern veranda, and the Rose the southern one.

I want to say, in this connection, that I consider these three vines superior to any others on the list. The Ampelopsis is desirable because of its entire hardiness, its extremely rapid growth, its ability to climb to any desired height, and, above all, its beauty. Throughout the summer it is a mass of thick green foliage. In autumn it takes on such

brilliant coloring—scarlet, crimson, and bronze,—that the whole vine seems to have changed its leaves to flowers. And after the foliage has fallen its purple-black berries, borne on red stems, make the vine quite as attractive as at any other period, as long as the robins will let them alone. This will not be long, however, for these birds come in flocks and take possession of the vines while their berries last.

Clematis Paniculata is an ideal flowering vine. It is especially adapted to use about verandas and porches. Like the Ampelopsis it is entirely hardy. It is not a vine of rampant growth, therefore it is not open to the objection urged against many vines of being "too much of a good thing." Its foliage is a rich, dark, glossy green, rather sparsely set along its slender branches, but there is enough of it to furnish a charming background for the pure white flowers which are produced in such profusion that the vine has

Clematis Paniculata is an Ideal Flowering Vine

the appearance of being covered with newly-fallen snow. Individually these flowers are small, but there are so many of them that the effect is all that one could ask. They do not appear until late in the season. On this account the plant is of special value. It does not attract attention because of brilliant coloring or large flowers, as is the case with most flowering vines, but simply by its exquisite beauty. Of all flowering vines I consider this the most desirable. The large-flowered varieties of the Clematis family are beautiful in their richness of color, but they are sadly lacking in the grace which characterizes Clematis Paniculata.

We are offered so many Roses of the "rambler" class that it is not an easy matter to choose between them unless one has an opportunity to see and compare the different kinds when in bloom. If we were to be governed by what is said about them in the catalogues, we should *never* be able to make a

satisfactory selection ; the description of each seems written to make us believe that we cannot afford to be without that particular variety. True, nearly all of them have merit, and most of them deserve consideration from all Rose lovers, but the one kind that appeals most strongly to me is the Dorothy Perkins. I select it for several reasons. Its habit of growth is so slender that it is really vine-like, and on that account it is more graceful than any other member of the rambler family that I have knowledge of. Its foliage is far more attractive than that of the Crimson Rambler, being a very dark, rich, glossy green, thus making the plant attractive when not in bloom. During its flowering period—late June and early July—its branches bend beneath a wealth of dainty pink blossoms, borne in long loose sprays. In shape and in color they are in every way superior to those of the Crimson Rambler, which has heretofore been the leading representative of its class.

I do not hesitate to give the Dorothy Perkins a place at the very head of the list of climbing Roses.

Right here, I think, is the proper place for me to make mention of my method of giving support to climbing Roses, all of which must be laid down and given protection in winter. Those who have had experience with them know how difficult it is to handle the stiff canes without breaking them, and what an unpleasant task it is to remove these canes from whatever support has been given them. I insert screw-hooks in the posts or walls over which I train the vines, and as they extend their growth I slip them over the hooks which are of a shape suited to prevent the vines from escaping their hold. Thus I furnish them with the support required during summer, and when fall comes it is as easy a matter to slip the vines *out of* the hooks as it was to slip them *in*. After they are dropped to the ground, I should advise

cutting away most of last year's growth before covering them. By doing this we keep each plant supplied with strong, new wood. It is a good plan to check the growth of this season's canes when they have grown to a satisfactory length, thus forcing them to throw out side-branches—something they are not inclined to do to any great extent if allowed to keep on growing throughout the season.

When the south veranda was made over into a plant-room it became necessary to shift the Dorothy Perkins Rose which had been trained up its posts and along its cornice to other quarters. We had not the heart to cut it down, and it was too large to transplant safely. The only disposition we could make of it was to train it along the south end of the east veranda, and give it a twist to the north when the angle of the cornice was reached. This would oblige it to share possession of the east veranda with the Clematis,

but there seemed to be ample room for both, and as their flowering-periods were so far apart there could be no rivalry between them.

When the Rose had been disposed of I saw an opportunity for further improvement of the home-place. The bare foundation walls of the house stared me in the face so aggressively that I determined to hide their nakedness by planting shrubs and other plants in front of them.

When spring came I carried out the plan I had in mind. I hired a man to dig up the soil to the depth of a foot and a width of six feet on all sides of the house. In this space I set out shrubs that would grow to a height of three feet or more, putting them about eight feet apart. In between them I put perennials, reserving the front row for bulbs and annuals. When the plants developed, the effect was extremely pleasing. The foundation walls were entirely hidden, and

the bank of foliage and flowers furnished such a charming setting for the house that since then I never see a house with exposed foundation-walls without wanting to seek out its owner, and tell him how easily he could add to the attractiveness of the place. If I were obliged to choose between the border at the sides of the yard, about which I have already written, and this house-border I should choose the latter.

Since mine was made a friend has made one for his home. He has used only two plants in it—Spirea Van Houetti and Dicentra, or Bleeding Heart. He set the shrubs so close that they touch each other, thus forming an unbroken bank of foliage all around the house. In front of them, also closely set, were placed the Dicentras. When the Spirea is covered with its white flowers and the Dicentra makes a brave display of its pink-and-white beauty, the color contrast is most delightful, and the harmony perfect.

Other combinations of a similar character might easily be made. If an effect of contrasting and harmonious colors is aimed at, a careful study of them must be made, and care should be taken to see that the plants used bloom at the same time.

Last year I saw a house-border that pleased me very much. It was made up wholly of annuals. Next to the wall was a row of Amaranthus, whose dull but rich Indian red tassels of bloom showed effectively against the gray walls of the house. In front of it was a row of the variety of Amaranthus having yellow-green foliage, and in front of this orange and scarlet Calliopsis. At the edge of the border were dwarf Nasturtiums, whose flowers of intense scarlet, glowing orange, and pale sulphur fitted in perfectly with the color-scheme. So rich was it, so harmonious, and so out of the common, that more than once I stopped to admire it.

At many parts of the north that variety

of Ampelopsis popularly known as Boston Ivy—but really a plant of Japanese origin—is hardy. This makes a beautiful covering for foundation walls. It takes firm hold of the stone with its tiny fingers, and clings so tenaciously that it is seldom dislodged by the strongest wind. Unlike our native Ampelopsis, it is not of rampant growth, and on that account it is more desirable as a wall-covering where a too luxuriant growth would be likely to give a somewhat ragged effect, unless given a great deal of attention.

A border surrounding the house is a most appropriate place for a collection of early spring-flowering bulbs. If they are planted under the windows where they will be seen by the occupants of the house without its being necessary to make a special trip out-of-doors in order to enjoy their beauty, they will give far greater pleasure than when given places in the lawn-border. Those who fail to grow bulbs in the home-garden de-

Our Native Ampelopsis is of Rampant Growth

prive themselves of at least six weeks of enjoyment. Hyacinths, Tulips, and Narcissi will fill the interval between the going of the snow and the flowering of the earlier shrubs and perennials with a riot of brilliant color that not even summer's flowers can excel. Plant these bulbs in September and October in rich, mellow loam. Cover with coarse litter before the ground freezes. Remove it as soon as the plants show signs of growth in the spring. When they have done flowering, and their foliage ripens and turns yellow, do not disturb them, but plant annuals among them for summer flowering.

CHAPTER XX

BULBS FOR WINTER FLOWERING

It must not be inferred that our plant-room was always overflowing with flowers. There were times, especially in early winter, when our plants were not in proper condition to supply us with the blossoms we so much appreciated. They had not yet made ready for the work of the long winter before them. We found from personal experience that there is no use in trying to hurry plants. We may force them to premature development, it is true, by applying fertilizers and giving more heat than they have been getting, but the result of this treatment is always unsatisfactory in the end. They seem to resent the idea of being urged ahead against their own good judgment of what the right

thing to do is—the reaction from over-stimulation,—and very often they refuse to bloom for a long time after such treatment has been given them.

An old greenhouse-man, to whom I often paid visits in search of helpful information regarding the culture of plants, asked me one day, when I had been complaining of a dearth in the home flower-crop :

"Don't you make use of bulbs for furnishing flowers at this season of the year?"

It was at the beginning of the holidays, when the windows of the florists were so brilliant with bloom that I could not help a feeling of envy every time I looked at them.

I answered that we never had done so.

"Then you've missed a good deal," he said. "There's no reason why you should not have plenty of flowers at this season. Hyacinths, Tulips, and Narcissi will give you a succession of bloom from December to February, if you manage them properly."

Then he proceeded to tell me what must be done in order to bring about so desirable a result. The following fall I put his advice to a practical test. So satisfactory was it that every fall since then we have grown bulbs in our plant-room. We would as soon think of giving up our regular plants as being without these always-to-be-depended-on ones. Perhaps I ought to qualify the statement by saying that they are to be depended on when given the right kind of treatment. Without that they are no more infallible than are other plants which are not properly cared for.

From what I have learned since we undertook the culture of bulbs for winter flowering, I have written the instructions which follow, for the benefit of other flower lovers who may not have had any experience in this phase of gardening.

Three things are essential to the successful culture of bulbs in the house: first, good

stock ; second, good soil ; third, root-development before top-growth takes place.

The first essential is readily met if you order your bulbs from a reliable dealer. Each season we see advertisements in which large collections of bulbs are offered at very low prices. Beware of them. As a general thing the wonderfully cheap ones are as cheap in quality as in price, and from such stock you cannot expect fine flowers. The best bulbs on the market are those that are imported from Holland, where both soil and climate are admirably adapted to the production of a first-class article, and where the matter of bulb-growing has been reduced to a science. These will cost a little more than American-grown ones, but they are well worth the difference in price. Inferior stock will give inferior flowers, and what one wants, when forcing bulbs in winter, is the best flowers it is possible to get.

The item of good soil is a most important

one. Bulbs can be grown, after a fashion, in almost any kind of soil, but they can be grown to perfection only in a compost whose basis is a sandy loam, made very rich with some good fertilizer. Heavy soils can be made lighter by mixing sharp, coarse sand with them until the mixture, after being squeezed tightly in the hand, will readily fall apart when pressure is relaxed.

The ideal fertilizer for all bulbs is old, thoroughly-rotted cow-manure. On no account should fresh manure of any kind be used. But it is not always possible to get manure from a cow-yard. Those who are unable to do so will find finely-ground bone-meal a good substitute. Use in the proportion of a pound to a half-bushel of soil. Mix thoroughly with the soil whatever fertilizer is used before potting the bulbs.

In potting bulbs for winter use in the home I should advise putting several in the same pot. Fill the pot with soil. Then

press down into it whatever bulbs you use. It will not be necessary to cover them. As many can be used in a pot as can be set on the surface of the soil in it so that they just touch each other. Do not attempt to make the soil hard beneath them or about them. If this is done their tender roots often fail to penetrate it, and the consequence is that the bulbs are pushed upward as their roots develop.

I advise the use of several bulbs in the same pot because it gives a greater amount of bloom in a limited space, and greatly economizes in soil, pots, and labor.

When you have put your bulbs into the soil, water well, and then set the pots away in a place that is both cool and dark. Some persons consider this unnecessary, and put their bulbs in the window as soon as potted. They seldom get any flowers from them. Storage in a cool, dark room until roots have formed is absolutely necessary to suc-

cess. The reason for it is plain if we stop to think that bulbs, like all other plants, must have roots before they can make a satisfactory growth of top.

As a general thing, bulbs will have to remain in cold storage six weeks before it will be safe to bring them to the light. But no definite time can be assigned. One must examine them from time to time to see what progress they are making. On no account should they be taken to the light until the pot is filled with roots, and indications of top-growth are seen.

It may sometimes be necessary to water them while in the dark room, but as a general thing the watering given at potting-time will be sufficient. Too much water while in the dark may cause serious trouble. But this, like the length of time allowed for root-development, is a matter that must be left to the judgment of the grower.

When bulbs are brought from the cellar or

wherever they were placed while roots were forming, they should not be put into very warm rooms. Too much heat, combined with the effect of light and water, will result in a growth too rapid to be healthy.

I should advise planting for a succession of bloom. This is important if you want flowers throughout the winter. Pot a few at intervals of ten days or two weeks, beginning in October. If this is done, it will be found an easy matter to keep the place bright with bloom from the opening of the holiday season to the advent of spring.

My wife tells me she thinks I am making my instructions so elaborate that I will frighten the amateur into not wanting to follow them. But if what I have said is read over carefully and given a little thought, it will readily be seen that a good deal of what might be thought instructions is really an explanation of the reasons which underlie the treatment outlined. It

is well to know *why* a certain thing should be done.

Now as to the kinds of bulbs I should advise: first, Hyacinths,—Holland and Roman; second, early Tulips; third, Narcissi,—Van Sion, Horsfeldii, Empress, Trumpet Major, and Paper White—the five best varieties for forcing; fourth, Bermuda Lilies, more commonly known as "Easter Lilies,"—catalogued as *L. Harrisii.*

Of the Holland Hyacinths, I prefer the single sorts, as the double kinds are *too* double to be really pleasing to a person who likes individuality in a flower. The Roman is more graceful than any other member of the family.

The early Tulip is much more satisfactory, for forcing, than any of the other varieties described in the catalogues of the florists.

My favorite of the list is the Narcissus or Daffodil. It is sure to bloom if given the treatment advised. It is so rich in color that

it seems made out of condensed sunshine. A pot of it makes one of the most cheerful gifts one can send to a shut-in friend.

The Easter Lily requires a treatment somewhat different from that advised for the other bulbs. It sends out two sets of roots, —one from the base of the bulb, the other from the stalk immediately above the bulb. In order to give both sets of roots an even chance we have to set the bulb deep in the soil. Let the pot be only half full of soil when the bulb is put into it. Press it down as directed for the other bulbs, and add no more soil until growth begins. Then, as the stalk reaches up, put more soil into the pot, and continue to do this until it is full. In this way both sets of roots are provided for.

If bone-meal is used as a fertilizer, be sure to get the finely ground article. Coarse bone-meal does not give an immediate effect, and that is what is necessary while the bulbs are forming their roots.

There are other bulbs that can be forced into winter flowering with but little trouble; but they are not as satisfactory as the kinds I have named, because they have not the rich color nor the habit that gives dignity to the plants already mentioned.

Many persons who grow bulbs endeavor to get a second crop of flowers from them. They seldom succeed in getting any. After they have once flowered in the house they are not to be depended on for a second crop of bloom. If you want to be sure of flowers, get fresh bulbs each season.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FERN GARDEN

One of the most attractive features of our home is its fern garden. I presume it would never have been if Mary and the boys and I had not gone on a tour of discovery one Sunday afternoon in October.

We had been told that the brook which ran across one corner of our lot had its start a mile or two back among the hills.

"You ought to take a tramp up that way some day, if you want to see some of the beauty-spots of nature," they told us. "There's nothing of the grand or majestic in the scenery that you'll see, but it's beautiful —just beautiful. We're planning to buy a few acres and keep it as it is for the park that we're going to need some day. It's a

little out of the way, still it's easy of access. A walk to it gives just enough exercise to make it a pleasant jaunt, and if one drives the distance is nothing. It's an ideal spot for picnics and all kinds of informal outings. Go out there the first time you have a little leisure and we'll warrant you'll be as enthusiastic over it as we are."

The Sunday afternoon of which I have already spoken was one to tempt a person out-of-doors—warm, sunny, delightful in every respect,—and the boys insisted on "going somewhere."

"What do you say to a trip to the earthly Paradise they've been telling us about ever since we came here?" I asked Mary. "Do you feel equal to a tramp of a mile or two across lots? We can go through the woods and save steps by it."

"I feel equal to a five-mile walk," answered Mary. "I don't know whether you've noticed it, but I'm quite a different

woman from the one who came here. I was over at Mrs. Hayes's yesterday, and we were weighed. I tipped the scales at one hundred and fifty-two pounds. I used to weigh a hundred and fifteen or twenty. Don't you think country life agrees with me? A walk of a mile doesn't tire me in the least. I might get a little tired if I were to walk five miles, but I'd be rested after it in half an hour."

So we set off, across lots, over the hill back of our home.

As soon as we struck the level at the rear of the hill, and entered the woods, we came upon great masses of fern that stood waist-high, and Mary fairly went into ecstasies over it.

"Do you know what I'm going to have?" she cried. "A fern garden. I wonder I never thought of it before. The boys and I can come over here and find the plants to fill it. We'll do every bit of the work ourselves.

There's just the place for it north of the house beside the steps, in the shade of the old elm. I suppose it's too late to do anything about it this fall, but we'll get at it the first thing in the spring."

That was where the fern-garden idea originated. It developed with remarkable rapidity as we went through the woods and found perhaps a dozen other varieties of fern, and many native plants that we were sure could easily be domesticated growing all along our route.

We had not expected to find anything very unusual in the way of scenery. But the spot we were in search of proved to be one of sylvan loveliness, one that a lover of nature could not fail to appreciate. At the point where our own little home-brook joined the larger stream into which it flowed, the view was wonderfully charming. Here the stream broadened into a miniature lake, with an island in its center, and the vistas of

water glimpsed through the trees that bordered the shores were a thousandfold more attractive than any of the park-views to which we had been accustomed. Here there was none of the artificiality of man's work; Nature had fashioned the landscape and she had made no mistakes in her work.

"It's the loveliest spot I ever saw," cried Mary, drawing a long breath of rapture. "It's like a glimpse into Paradise."

When we took the homeward track I suggested that we follow the brook. This proposal the boys were quick to endorse. "Because it's *our* brook when it gets to our place," said Tom. A sense of proprietorship made it attractive to him.

Half-way home we came upon a spot between steep and rocky banks where the brook formed a pool, in which it seemed to pause and rest for a moment before it took up its onward course and dropped in a little cascade over the mossy rocks heaped irregu-

larly at the lower side of it, from which it went babbling on its way.

"Wouldn't this be an ideal spot in which to camp?" said Mary. "And just think! It can't be much more than half a mile from home! Who ever would have dreamed that we had such an attraction almost in our back-yard? When some of our city friends come out to see us next summer, we'll bring them here and have a real picnic dinner in the loveliest spot they ever saw."

A shout from Tom announced the fact that he had discovered a fish.

"It was a trout," he cried. "I know it was, 'cause it had speckles on it. I say, Papa, can't Rob and I come out here camping next summer? It's just over the hill back of the house, you know. We wouldn't be afraid to stay here all night, would we, Rob? We may come, mayn't we, Papa?"

"We'll see about it when next summer comes," I said.

I began this chapter with the intention of telling how we made our fern garden, but I see that I have digressed sadly. The pleasant memory of our first trip to what has since become the property of Brookvale, and is henceforth to be its "park," obscured for the moment the idea I had in mind when I began to write.

If there happens to be a place on the home-grounds of any of my readers that is well shaded during the greater part of the day it ought to be made into a fern garden, if one is in reach of wood or pasture from which to gather material for it. For a collection of ferns, once well established, will afford more pleasure to its owner than a large collection of ordinary plants. It will have in it the charm of greater beauty throughout the season than can be found in most shrubs and perennials when not in bloom, and the rarity of a fine collection of native plants will be something of which to be proud. The mak-

ing of such a collection will, in itself, afford pleasure enough to make it worth while to spend a good deal of time and labor upon it.

The impression prevails that it is a very difficult matter to make a fern from the forest live and flourish when an attempt is made to domesticate it. Such is not the case, however, if we go at it in the right way. Most persons who set about making a collection of these plants do not begin the undertaking early enough in the season. They wait until the ferns have fully developed their fronds, and choose the largest plants, hoping to transfer them to the home-grounds without any loss of foliage. In doing this they simply attempt an impossibility, for large plants cannot be transplanted without considerable disturbance of their roots, no matter how carefully we work, and the direct result of root-disturbance is the loss of the plant's foliage. Many of these plants, however, will not die, and

A Collection of Ferns Will Afford Great Pleasure

another season they may start into growth, but they will have received such a check by their removal and the sacrifice of many of their roots that they will afford far less satisfaction than can be obtained from smaller plants set out as early in the spring as it is possible to procure them. One should not let the desire for immediate effect govern in the making of a fern garden. Be content to plant and then wait.

If you want to be sure of success in the cultivation of ferns and other wild plants, it is quite important that they should be procured before they have developed their foliage in the spring, and it is equally important that they should be lifted without disturbing their roots. This can be done only by selecting small or young plants, for old and large ones will have roots of such a size that it will be utterly impossible to lift them by any ordinary means and leave their root-system intact.

I have been very successful in domesticating ferns, and I have made it a practice to procure my plants as soon as possible after the frost is out of the ground. I lift them with a large amount of soil adhering to their roots, and set them carefully in a basket, crowding them together so firmly that there is no chance for the soil to crumble away during the homeward journey. I prepare beforehand the place in which they are to be planted, so that they can be set out without delay. When in the ground I water them well, and cover with a mulch of leaves. This may not be absolutely necessary, but it helps to preserve the original conditions under which the plants have grown, and makes the change less severe.

In preparing a place for ferns, excavate about six inches of soil, and fill the excavation with leaf-mold, or the best substitute for it that is available. A wagon-load of wood's earth will be sufficient to fill a space large

enough to accommodate at least two dozen plants. I have found that nearly all varieties of our ferns can be grown successfully if given such a soil in which to establish themselves. After the first year, their roots adapt themselves to the conditions existing in the stratum of soil below that which was brought from the woods, and seem to do as well in it as they did in the one in which they had grown before transplanting. But if planted at first in such a soil, they fail to do well.

If soil from the woods is not obtainable in sufficient quantity to carry out the plan outlined above, an excellent substitute for it may be had by turning over sward on the roadside or in old pasture lots, and shaving away that portion of it immediately below its upper surface. This will be full of fine grass-roots, and these roots will, when rotted, give a vegetable compost so nearly like that of decayed leaves that plants

hardly seem to know the difference. As this material is obtainable anywhere outside the city, there is no excuse for not making use of it in our attempt to make things as easy as possible for the young plants which cannot be expected to do well if the change to which they are subjected is violent in character. Success in the culture of ferns depends largely on imitating original conditions until such a time as they have had a chance to adapt themselves to the new order of things.

Shade is desirable. But I have seen fine specimens of the large varieties growing luxuriantly when fully exposed to the sun. A soil similar to that of the woods in which the young plants began their existence seems to be the thing of greatest importance for the first year of their domestication.

Trilliums, blood-root, hepaticas, and other early-flowering wild plants can be planted among the ferns with fine effect. These will

complete their period of bloom before the ferns have made much development, therefore they will not interfere with the latter in the least. Shortly after blooming, most of them will drop their foliage and disappear, but the following spring they will put in an appearance as soon as the snow melts.

With slight encouragement from their elders, children will undertake the making of a fern garden, and, once they become interested in it, no further incentive will be needed, for they will delight in the trips to the woods for plants. And in setting them out and caring for them they will learn things about plant-life and plant-growth far more practical than the instruction given in the text-books of the school course.

CHAPTER XXII

HOTBEDS AND COLD-FRAMES

Two seasons of gardening without a hotbed in which to give some of our plants an early start convinced us that if we would keep up with our neighbors we must have a hotbed of our own.

Those who had them were very generous with their seedlings, and kept us well supplied with early plants for the garden, but both Mary and I liked to be independent. We decided that the time had come for us to grow our own plants.

"We want earlier radishes and lettuce than we can grow in the garden beds," she said. "We can't have them unless we have a hotbed to grow them in. Let's have one."

"We will," I answered.

The very next day I visited my friend of the greenhouse. He gave me all the information that was necessary to enable me to construct a hotbed that would grow plants quite as well as some of the expensive ones that a dealer had tried to sell me.

"All there is to a hotbed when you simmer it down," said the greenhouse-man, "is a place in which you can get heat enough to start plants sooner than it can be done in the garden. You've got to get this heat from the soil, and you've got to have some means of keeping it and controlling it after you've got it. That's just what a hotbed is for. It's amusing to hear some folks talk about it. They have an idea that it takes a genius to make a hotbed and raise plants in it. But it's the simplest thing in the world, when you come to look into the matter."

By carefully following the instructions of my friend who knew whereof he spoke, having made hotbeds each season for the last

twenty-five years, I had but little trouble in making *my* hotbed. Not being intended by nature for the carpenter-trade, my work was not of a character calculated to stand close inspection, but it answered its purpose, and that was the important thing to be considered.

A hotbed frame should be from eighteen inches to two feet high at the back, and about a foot high in front, which should always be to the south, in order to get the benefit of sun-heat in addition to that furnished by the fermented material beneath the surface soil. Because of being lower at the front the glass is given such a slope as is best adapted to take advantage of the sunshine.

It is to be presumed that you decide on the location of your hotbed before you make the frame for it. A well-drained knoll is the best place, provided it is fully exposed to the sun.

The first thing to do is to make an excavation about eighteen inches in depth. Some persons make their hotbeds *on* the soil rather than *in* it, but the latter method seems to be most satisfactory. By this means moisture enough to meet the requirements of the young plants is secured, while a hotbed *on* the soil necessitates frequent watering during the early stages of growth, and the application of water to tender seedlings, while subjected to a high degree of heat, calls for such good judgment on the part of the amateur gardener that I should not advise him to undertake it until after he has had some experience with caring for plants grown under these conditions.

Fill the excavation with fresh horse-manure to a depth of ten inches, tramping it down as solidly as possible. It must never be left in a loose condition.

When the pit has been filled with manure, put the frame in place. Then add the soil

in which seed is to be sown. It should be rich and mellow. There should be about five inches of it. After this is done, wait for fermentation to take place. Keep the sash closed until strong heat is generated.

As a general thing the hotbed will be ready for the seed in three or four days after the manure has been put in. It is well, however, to test the heat inside the frame before sowing anything. If the thermometer registers 85° or thereabouts, it will be safe to go ahead with seed-sowing; but not before. If seed were to be sown while fermentation was at its height, it would literally be burned up.

In sowing seed in the hotbed, cover it lightly. If at any time more moisture seems needed apply it with a watering-can having a spray nozzle. Never use one throwing a stream, because the water thrown from it will have force enough to dislodge the young plants if it does not wash them out of place.

A stream is open to another objection—it does not apply the water evenly. Never apply it *in any form* while the sun is shining on the glass. If you do you run the risk of having a lot of scalded plants on your hands.

Whenever the glass becomes covered with moisture, raise the sash *a little*, and leave it up until the panes become clear. Moisture and sun-heat acting together often ruin the young plants before one becomes aware of the danger. Therefore it is necessary to make frequent observations, and to take precautions against overheating.

Fresh air should be given judiciously as soon as the plants have gotten a good start. Unless this is done "damping off" often occurs. This is due to too much moisture in the enclosure. It is impossible to give instructions of an absolutely definite character regarding the airing of hotbeds. This is another instance where much must be left

to the good judgment of the amateur gardener. The knowledge necessary to proper management will come from experience, and it can come in no other way.

If cold spells occur after the hotbed is in operation it will be necessary to cover the glass on frosty nights, for if frost forms on it enough cold will be radiated downward to check the plants, and sometimes to kill them.

If the frame is banked outside with earth, or a mixture of horse-manure and litter, heat will be retained more satisfactorily than when all the frame is left exposed.

There should be a cold-frame with every hotbed. It is simply a frame similar to the hotbed frame, set over rich soil into which seedlings from the hotbed are to be transplanted as soon as they have attained a size which makes it necessary to give them more room. Here they are to be left until the ground is in a condition that justifies one in planting them out.

The cold-frame, like the hotbed, should be provided with a covering for the protection of the plants on cold nights and during spells of stormy weather. On every pleasant day this covering should be removed to allow fresh air to have free circulation about the plants.

In a hotbed of home construction it is an easy matter to get three weeks' or a month's start of garden-sown vegetables. We almost always have radishes and lettuce in April.

The freshness of vegetables when brought directly from our hotbed to the table makes those procurable in the city markets seem insipid and tough. We frequently have tomato plants in bud before they are removed from the cold-frame.

In short, so satisfactory has been our experience with the hotbed as an advance-agent of the garden, that we wonder how we ever got along without one.

Needless to say, as I am in the city during the day, much of the success of our experiment depended on the care given the hotbed by Mary and the boys. The latter soon grew to understand its management and took great pride in looking after it and caring for the young plants that had been started therein.

CHAPTER XXIII

OUR WATER SYSTEM

When we settled in the country we knew that we should have to do without many of the conveniences of the city, for a time at least. One of the things that my wife missed most was water that could be had by turning a faucet.

I have spoken of the brook that ran through one corner of the home-lot. The water in it was clear and cold, and from it we obtained the house-supply.

We had not been there long when I discovered that the brook was fed by a spring on the lot back of us. As this lot was considerably higher than ours, the idea occurred to me that here was a chance to supply the house with water in a manner which, if

not quite equal to city methods, would be a great improvement over the one then in use.

My plan was to conduct water through a pipe connected with the spring to a reservoir in the basement of the house. The flow would be rapid, because it would be downhill all the way, with no bends in the pipe to interfere with it. Therefore the water delivered to the reservoir would be almost as cool and fresh as if obtained directly from the spring. From the reservoir the house-supply could be pumped with but little trouble. Through an overflow pipe running *from* the reservoir, surplus water would be carried off. As there would be water running into and out of this reservoir at all times, there would be a constant circulation, thus insuring freshness and coolness at all seasons.

I consulted our farmer neighbor as to the feasibility of my plan.

"Work? Of course it'll work," he said. "You can't keep water from runnin' down-hill, and that's the principle you're goin' on. It'll cost you something for pipe, and havin' it laid, and cuttin' through the cellar wall, and puttin' in a tank, but I s'pose you've figured on that already. Your idea seems to be to have everything about the place handy, even if it does cost something, and I reckon this last idea of yours will work out slick enough to suit you."

It did. I had a tank made of galvanized iron, large enough to hold two or three barrels of water. There was no need of a larger one, I concluded, as the pipe from the spring would bring the water in such quantity that the tank would be practically full at all times, the amount required for household use being but "a drop in the bucket" as compared with the amount delivered to and passing through the tank. From this tank water could be pumped to the kitchen above.

Another pump connecting with the bathroom over the kitchen would enable us to supply all the water needed there with but little trouble.

Our system of water-works was a success —as far as it went. It was far easier to pump water from the tank below than it was to make frequent trips to the brook after it.

Mary was so pleased with the improvement that she declared it was really a pleasure to operate the pump that brought water to the kitchen. But I have in mind an improvement on the present system, one that will do away with hand-pumping by forcing the water to the attic and letting it run to the basement through pipes from which it can be drawn by faucets. A small gasoline engine would lift the water rapidly and economically, and the boys would soon learn to operate it. This plan, however, is to be worked out in the future, along with other

improvements that may suggest themselves from time to time, for, as the copy-book used to say, "there is always room for improvement."

CHAPTER XXIV

OUR COW COMES HOME

It was a great day in our family when the cow I had bought was brought home.

Mary had, from the first, been looking forward longingly and impatiently to the time when we could afford a cow. With me it was not so much a question of being able to afford one as it was of what we should do with one if we had it.

Our acre of land would not furnish pasture for it, for by this time most of it had been planted with apple, plum, and cherry trees. Nor could we grow enough food on it to last a cow the year round. Hiring pasturage from one of the neighbors would not only be expensive but inconvenient, because it would oblige the boys to go to and from pasture

twice a day, thus interfering with the work I had trained them to do about the home-place. They had often told me that they would do the milking and take all the care of a cow whenever I saw fit to get one. I knew they would do this as well as any man could, for they were growing up to be manly, dependable fellows, and they had the welfare and interest of the home as much at heart as I had.

I made inquiries regarding the ownership of the piece of woodland back of and adjoining my acre of ground, and found that it could be bought, but at a price a good deal higher than that I had paid for the home-lot. Without doubt it was worth all that was asked for it. But could I afford to pay the price?

I had been regularly depositing a certain portion of the money I earned in the bank. Some of the improvements I had made had obliged me to draw on this reserve, but as

soon as we began to use our garden the cost of daily living had been so reduced that I felt justified in using more of our rainy-day fund than I otherwise would have dared to. Real estate was steadily rising in price in our neighborhood, and I argued that money put into this piece of land would be a good investment.

"You won't find any difficulty in getting rid of it, if you ever want to sell," our neighbors said. "The money you put into it'll bring you more, in the long run, than you'd get if you let it out at a good rate of interest."

I thought as they did about it, and—I bought the land.

Mary had so frequently and so pathetically lamented the lack of milk and cream, and had spoken in such enthusiastic and glowing terms of what home-cooking might be made "if we had a cow," that I had arrived at the conclusion I was losing money every day by

not having one. When the land was bought I knew that the time looked forward to so eagerly had come, and I invested in the cow that she had set her heart on having.

She was a beauty,—a Jersey, with a coat like rich cream in color, and so smooth and silky that it shone like satin. Her eyes were like a deer's. And she was so gentle that the boys could put their arms about her neck and fondle her to their heart's content. While they were doing it she kept on chewing her cud as complacently as if she felt fully entitled to the homage that was being rendered her. For the first week after she was turned into the newly-bought pasture-lot, Mary and the boys spent most of the time in taking good things to her. At least so I inferred from what I heard said when I came home in the evening. And on Sunday I noticed that she spent most of her time at the pasture bars, waiting for the treats she had come to expect, and reminding us by a

mellow moo-o, whenever she caught sight of us, that she was ready for whatever we had to offer in the way of eatables.

It did not take long for me to find out that my wife's assertions as to the value of milk and cream in the household were founded on a substantial basis. We were no longer obliged to be content with a teaspoonful of creamless milk in our tea or coffee. We used *cream,*—thick, rich, golden cream.

Before we became used to it as a part of the daily bill of fare, we had considerable difficulty in ridding ourselves of the impression that the meals at which it was used were "special occasions" at which we were allowed an extra luxury. We smothered our strawberries in it. Our shortcakes were so permeated by its richness that each bite fairly melted in our mouths. And for a while the boys forswore all ordinary food for the sake of bread and milk. I did not

wonder at this, for often I had a bowl of it myself, and I found it as delicious as was the bread and milk I had been used to eating when a boy on my visits to grandfather's.

I have often heard the assertion made that a "cow is half a family's living." There is a good deal of truth in the statement. I say this as the result of our experience in keeping one. And I am also prepared to say that with a cow and a garden one can cover at least two-thirds of the entire cost of the family's food. Flour, sugar, tea, and coffee will have to be bought, of course, but with the products of the garden and the milk and cream that a good cow will furnish, we can live "on the fat of the land" at a cash expense so slight that we have no cause to grumble about the "increasing cost of living."

CHAPTER XXV

MENDING OUR WAYS

We had moved into our new home in the fall of the year. It was then too late in the season to make permanent walks about the place, and some temporary ones were hastily constructed of boards. I intended to dispense with them when spring came, and make gravel ones to take their place. But that first spring found so much work waiting to be done that the question of walks was put aside for future consideration.

There was so much more important work to be done about the place all through the summer and fall that I found no opportunity, in the limited time at my disposal, to give the walk-question consideration that year, and after that we seemed to forget all

about it until four years had gone by. By that time the boards had decayed and become loosened from the timbers to which they had been fastened, and one day Robert told me that our apology for a walk was getting really unsafe.

"A board is likely to fly up any time and trip one up," he said. "It seems to me it would be better to tear the old things up and go without any rather than run the risk of somebody's taking a tumble and breaking an arm or leg. If that were to happen it would cost more than a new set of walks would."

I went out and looked the walks over, and came to the conclusion that the boy was right, for I stepped on the end of a loose board and came near measuring my length on the grass. There was no getting around the fact that they were in a really dangerous condition.

Some of our neighbors had been putting in

cement walks. I consulted them as to cost and method of construction, and found that they considered them not only cheaper than plank walks at the present high price of lumber, but that they were in every way preferable. I also learned that the construction of them was so simple that it was not necessary to employ expensive workmen for their making.

"Once properly down, they will last forever," said one of the neighbors to whom I had gone for advice. "If the material of which they are made is properly mixed and used in the right proportions, the result will be a block as hard as stone, and apparently as durable. They look neat, as you see, and it is an easy matter to keep them clean in winter. From my experience I consider it economy to install them in preference to any other kind."

Upon such recommendation, I decided on having them.

I hired one man to draw sand and gravel, another to make the necessary excavations, and a third to see to the mixing of the concrete and putting it in place.

From what my friends told me about the construction of these walks, I wrote out the following instructions to be used by the men who were intrusted with the work, and I give it here for the benefit of any reader who may decide upon putting them in about his home.

The first thing to be done is to make an excavation about six inches deep. Fill it with very coarse gravel, or small stone, using no sand, cement, or water with it. This is to act as drainage material through which water from rains or melting snows will run off so rapidly that none will be retained to be acted upon by frost. If water were to collect there and freeze, its expansive power would be sure to crack the block above, therefore the importance of good drainage

will be readily understood. Pound down whatever material is used for this sub-stratum of the walk as firmly as possible before putting anything on top of it. This is a matter of great importance, for if thrown in loosely and *not* made firm it will be likely to settle, thus causing trouble with the block above.

When your excavation is made and filled in, set up strips of board along the outside of the walk-that-is-to-be. Pieces of building timber known as "two-by-fours" will be better than boards, because of their greater stiffness. It will be necessary to fasten firmly in place whatever is used as a frame for the walk, as the pressure of the filling will have a tendency to force it away from a straight line, thus making your walk, when completed, uneven on its edges. Whatever nailing is done to keep the side-strips in place must be done *from the outside*, for the space between them must be filled with ce-

ment, and nothing must be allowed to interfere with it after once put in place.

On top of the drainage material put about four inches of concrete. Make this by mixing four parts of coarse gravel with one part of clear cement. Mix the two in a dry state. When thoroughly mixed, add enough water to make the mixture of a consistency that will admit of its easily being poured out of a pail. Spread it over the foundation stratum of the walk, and work it out as evenly as possible with spade or hoe. You are then ready for the upper stratum which should be made of two parts of sifted sand, and one part of cement. Mix while dry, and then add water enough to make it about as thick as plastering mortar. Use enough to fill the board frame. After having spread it out as evenly as possible go over it with a mason's smoothing-trowel, and make the surface perfectly level.

Cover with boards or blankets at night to

prevent anything from walking on it until it has hardened. It will take about thirty-six hours for it to become hard enough for persons to walk on.

It is quite important, if you want to make a nice job of it, that the sand used in the last coat should be well sifted. Lumps and pebbles will eventually work loose and make holes in your walk. It pays to do good and careful work with the surface-coat.

Some persons prefer to divide their walks into blocks. This is done by setting up thin cross-strips between the boards used at the sides. I see no need of this, however, for observation has convinced me that the separate blocks are quite as likely to crack as the walk if constructed in one continuous piece. Block-work involves considerable more expense, and calls for more experienced workmanship.

The argument in favor of blocking the

walks is this: It is taken for granted that there will be more or less heaving of the ground, because of the action of frost, and if this takes place under a block, that block will be lifted independently, and this without cracking it. When the walk is made of one continuous strip, as most of those in our neighborhood are, with proper provision for good drainage, there will be no accumulation of water to freeze and expand. Hence the preference for continuous-strip work by those who have tried both ways. The fallacy of the argument in favor of block-work will be readily seen if one takes notice of the cracked blocks he passes over daily.

It will be seen from what I have written above that cement walks are easily made. Because of their durability and their neat appearance they commend themselves strongly to the home-maker. I consider them more satisfactory than gravel walks, as ordinarily

made, and cheaper, for these, when made as they ought to be in order to give perfect satisfaction, call for experienced workmanship and expensive material.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN ADDITION TO THE FAMILY

ONE night I came home from the city to find that there had been an addition to the family during my absence. As I came up the path from the road I saw a dog sitting on the veranda. It was not a bulldog; it was not a collie; it was not a setter; neither was it a mastiff. To be honest about it, we never discovered what the breed of it was. Sometimes we thought this strain of dog-blood predominated, sometimes that, and next day, perhaps, the other. About the only conclusion we arrived at and held to in our efforts to settle the matter was that he was a composite dog. But above all he was a good dog, and when one can conscientiously say that what more needs saying?

As I came up the steps the dog at the head of them rose up in canine dignity, wagged his tail, and delivered himself of a bark that was quite unlike that of most dogs when strange people come their way. The average dog expresses himself in a bark that has a covert threat and warning in it. It seems to say: "Be careful! I don't know whether I'm going to tolerate you or not. If I don't like you, look out!" This dog's bark seemed to be in the class with the hearty "How-are-you,-sir?" salutation of a good-natured, friendly human. It had in it a note of welcome for me to my own home, and was delivered with an air that suggested proprietorship of the premises. As I ascended the steps he came down to meet me. There was no suggestion of fear in his action, no hesitancy that implied a doubt of the reception he was to meet with. Indeed, he gave me the impression that he felt quite sure of himself and his position.

I put out my hand to pat his head, and as I did so he looked up in my face so frankly, so trustfully, and with such honesty expressed in his canine countenance, that I took a liking to him then and there.

Just about that time the door flew open, and Tom and Robert came tearing down the steps. As they did so, Tom's hat flew off, and the next instant the dog had it in his mouth and was racing around the yard with it, Tom close at his heels, but never quite near enough to regain his property. As they dashed by me in the third round I called out:

"Drop it, sir!"

No sooner were the words out of my mouth than the dog dropped the hat, and looked at me in a way that said as plainly as words: "All right, sir; you're the boss."

"Isn't he a nice doggie?" cried Tom. "We don't know where he came from. We found him sitting on the veranda, and he

acted just as if he was waiting for us. We fed him, and we've been having a jolly time with him ever since. We're going to keep him if you'll let us. Mamma says *she's* willing. May we?"

I looked into the shaggy face upturned to mine with a look in it that said, "I know what you're talking about. What's your decision? Am I to go or to stay?"

"We'll let him stay till some one comes to claim him," I said. "Quite likely he belongs to some family in the neighborhood."

The dog gave a bark, and looked at the boys. I suppose it was all in my imagination, but it really seemed as if there was a smile on his face, and that it stood for: "I told you so! I was quite sure how it would turn out. It's all settled—I'm one of you!"

And from that day Jock, as the boys christened him, *was* one of us. No one came to claim him, and we never knew from where he had come.

I had never owned a dog before, and had only a vague idea of the intelligence of the animal, and knew nothing whatever about its ability to make itself a companion and a friend. Indeed, Jock was a revelation to me. It was not long before I had as strong an affection for him as the children had. He made himself useful in numberless ways. He was a self-constituted guardian of the children, who firmly believed that his equal did not exist. He was, in short, a creature to respect and to love—a gentleman of dogdom.

I presume that some reader of this book who does not care for dogs will take me to task for saying a good word for them in a book on home-making. But it seems to me, when I look back upon the friendship that grew up between Jock and all the rest of the family, that here is just the place to say what I have said. For so pleasant have been the relations between dog and man that

I am inclined to think there ought to be a dog in every home. Anything, everything, that has a tendency to make the home pleasant is entitled to consideration here. Therefore I feel that I am justified in giving this advice to the home-maker—own a dog!

CHAPTER XXVII

A CHAPTER OF POSTSCRIPTS

If you want fine currants you must take good care of the bushes. (This advice applies with equal pertinence to all kinds of small-fruit, and to everything grown in the garden, as well.) Nine times out of ten, currants are neglected shamefully, simply because the owner of them has an impression that, being so hardy, they ought to take care of themselves. The bushes go unpruned from year to year. The grass is allowed to grow up about them. They are seldom manured, and the currant-worm is allowed to make havoc of the growing fruit. If any escapes, it is so small, and there are so many worthless berries in the clusters that not

much use can be made of it, and the conclusion is arrived at that the variety under cultivation—or neglect, rather,—must be inferior, and that it will be necessary to set out a better sort in order to obtain satisfactory results. But if the owner would go over the old bushes, cut out at least half the branches that have been allowed to grow—and *all* the weak ones—dig away the grass from their roots, *keep* it dug away thereafter, and apply a generous amount of manure, they would make a strong, healthy growth of new branches from which a generous crop of fine, large fruit could be expected next year. This will prove to the grower that his currants were not to blame for their failure, but that his neglect was the direct cause of it. The bushes are easily discouraged by poor treatment, but when we give them proper care they respond to it promptly and bountifully.

Some persons object to the currant because

of its acidity. This I consider one of its chief merits. Its sourness has a healthy quality in it that has a better effect on the system than medicine. Indeed, it is worth growing for its medicinal quality alone. If it is put on ice for an hour before using, and dusted over with sugar when brought to the table, it forms one of the most delicious accompaniments imaginable for the more substantial items of the summer bill of fare. I consider it really one of the most valuable of all the summer small-fruits. Those who have never formed a liking for it will, if they give it a fair trial, soon become as fond of it as they are of grape-fruit. It is well suited to take the place of the latter in country homes. It is essentially a fruit for summer use, but the housewife who looks ahead in summer-time to the pleasure of the household in winter will not fail to make good use of it in jams and jellies and spiced preparations that will be found more de-

lightful to the palate than almost anything else she can prepare.

Two varieties of currants should be in every collection, a red one and a white one. The white variety is rather sweeter than the red one, and on that account may be preferred by some.

My wife says that currants are worth growing for their looks alone. A bowl of them on the dinner or tea table is quite as ornamental as flowers, and can be made extremely decorative if some of the foliage is used as a garnish around the fruit to afford color-contrast.

I have spoken of the necessity of keeping currant bushes free from worms if a fine crop of fruit is desired. This can be done by spraying with an infusion of Nicoticide applied early in the season while the fruit is forming. Some persons, however, may object to the use of a spray containing an extract of tobacco, thinking that it will com-

municate its taste to the fruit. They are mistaken in this, for the rains that fall before the fruit ripens will wash away all traces of the application. Those who object to this insecticide will find soap-suds effective, provided it is used daily for a time. Whatever is used should be applied after sundown. Care must be taken to see that it reaches every portion of the plant. I should advise taking it for granted that worms will come, and that spraying be done before they put in their appearance. It is easier to *keep* them away than it is to get rid of them after they have taken possession of the bushes.

Speaking of putting currants on ice reminds me that I have neglected to say a good word for country ice-houses. Every home ought to have one. Ice in the country in summer is regarded more as a luxury than as a necessity. This ought not to be so. If you want to get full benefit

from milk and cream you must have ice to use with it. Butter that comes to the table in a semi-liquid condition is not attractive to the eye or to the palate, but in this condition it is generally seen in the country in hot weather. Ask the head of the family what she thinks about ice as a desirable article for household use, and I venture the assertion that she will give you her opinion in no uncertain terms.

A house quite large enough to supply the needs of the average family can be built with but little expense, if the work is done by home labor, and it will not cost much to fill it, as this part of the work can be attended to at a time when not much else can be done to advantage. It is cheaper to put up your own ice and have all you care to use than it is to buy it in small quantities from the ice-man and be obliged to practice so much economy in its use that you get little satisfaction from it.

I would urge the owner of a window-garden always to keep on hand a supply of potting soil. Generally there is none at hand when it is needed most, and the plants that ought to be repotted are obliged to wait "for a more convenient season," or they are put into whatever soil is handiest to get at the time, with the intention of providing a better one later on. In either case the poor plants are quite likely to go a long time without receiving the necessary attention. The consequence of such neglect is in most instances a check from which the plants will be a long time in recovering. Make it a rule to do for your plants whatever needs doing as soon as the need is discovered.

It is an easy matter to make a really good potting-soil from the odds and ends of the yard, so to speak. Gather up leaves from the lawn in the fall, and store them somewhere under cover. Pour soap-suds from washing-day over them, stirring them well every time

you do so. Add some sand from time to time. The sharper it is the better your compost will be. Cut sward from the roadside, full of tiny grass-roots, and chop it into fine pieces before adding it to the other materials. If there happens to be any manure about the place mix it in. It will not be long before the leaves decay, and when that has taken place your soil will be ready for use.

Frequent mention has been made in preceding chapters of "a good fertilizer." My readers may like to know what I mean by that. Liquid manure, made by soaking dry cow-droppings in water till the infusion is the color of table-tea, is preferable to anything else in the fertilizer line for potted plants. But cow-droppings are not always procurable. An excellent substitute is finely ground bone-meal. It should be worked into the soil about the roots of the plants. A teaspoonful to a seven- or eight-inch pot once

a fortnight ought to keep a plant growing healthily. Care should be taken, however, not to give enough to bring on a growth too rapid to be healthy. When a plant shows signs of wanting to rest by ceasing to grow and bloom, withhold a further supply until signs of a new growth are to be seen. Never use any kind of fertilizer on dormant plants.

Care must be taken to keep hanging plants well watered. We often hear persons say that they have "no luck" with this class of plants. Investigation almost invariably shows, in cases of this kind, that the soil is so dry just below the surface that it would be impossible for the roots of any plant to derive benefit from it. Because it is not as easy to water hanging plants as those on the window-sill, they are almost always neglected. This explains the cause of failure ninety-nine times out of a hundred. If they get all the water they need—and this means keeping

them always moist at the roots—you will have no difficulty in growing them.

Every season you will find young plants of Hollyhock, Delphinium, and other perennials springing up about the old ones. Plant some of these in a corner by themselves and hold them in reserve to take the places of old and worn-out ones. If you have no use for them, give them to your neighbors. Persons will always be found in every neighborhood who will be delighted to get them.

Why not give them to the children to plant on the school-grounds?

Sometimes the shrubs and plants we set out get into the wrong places. Their habit of growth, their flowering season, or their color, may be so out of harmony with other shrubs and plants about them that it is advisable to locate them elsewhere for the sake of keeping peace in the plant-family. Fall is a good

time in which to do this work of rearrangement. But before doing it, make sure that there will be no clash between the plants you move and those with which they are to be associated. Harmony in the garden is as important as harmony in the household.

It seems to be the general impression among amateur gardeners that shrubs and perennials cannot be safely transplanted in the fall. This is a mistake. If they are taken in hand as soon as they have ripened their foliage, they can be moved with perfect safety. Before lifting it is well to water them to make the soil about their roots hold together more firmly than it will if quite dry, as it generally is in the fall. Take them up carefully, with a large amount of soil adhering to the roots, which should be disturbed as little as possible. Have the place in which they are to be planted ready for them, and get them into the ground as soon as possible.

Water well after planting to settle the loose soil which you fill in about them. If this is done early in the season they will make some root-growth before winter sets in, and they will give you a much finer crop of flowers next season than you can get from spring-set plants. A good deal of garden work can be done to much better advantage in the fall than in the spring, as there is more leisure, and the ground is in a condition that will make better work possible.

Do not overlook native plants in your efforts to make the home-place attractive. We have many shrubs quite as meritorious as some of the imported kinds for which we pay large prices. One of these is the white-flowered Elder. A great bush of it, covered with its lace-like, ivory-white flowers in July, is far more beautiful than the Hydrangeas which are so extensively grown at the present time, and of which we are beginning to tire. The Wild Rose is far more desirable

than the Snowball, but not one in a thousand thinks of giving it a place in the home-garden. Our native Clematis Flammula is a most excellent vine for planting about porches and verandas. So is the Bittersweet, the Celastrus Scandens of the catalogues. One would have no difficulty in finding shrubs and vines enough in the immediate vicinity of most country homes to beautify the entire place.

Beware of the tree-peddler! The reader may think because I give this warning without any qualifications that I mean to convey the impression that *all* tree-peddlers are fakes and frauds. Not so, however. Some of the persons who go about the country selling trees and plants are no doubt honest. But as we have no means of distinguishing between the honest and the dishonest ones, I should advise avoiding all of them. The probabilities are that the honest ones have

been deceived as to the character of the goods they sell. This being the case, the result is the same, so far as the purchaser is concerned, as when the oily-tongued, bland-looking fraud of an agent is patronized. If you want to be sure of getting just what you want, order directly from reliable dealers.

If a fence of any kind seems to be needed about the home-grounds, make one of wire netting, stretched upon posts set firmly in the ground. Over this netting train such vines as the native Ampelopsis or the Wild Grape. Either vine will cover the netting completely in a short time. The effect will be as pleasing as that of a hedge which it would take several years to make, and which would cost many times as much.

We often hear the statement made that vines will injure the walls of the houses over which they are trained because they retain moisture after heavy rains. On this account

many persons refuse to make use of them, and leave the walls of the home naked. My experience goes to show that the wooden walls of a vine-covered house remain in good condition longer than those fully exposed to the elements. The leaves of most vines overlap and act as shingles, and prevent rather than encourage moisture.

It is a good plan to look at the plants stored in the cellar once in a while during the winter to make sure how they are getting along. If the soil seems *dry*, apply water enough to moisten it all through. Some plants will insist on shedding their foliage when in winter storage. But this is nothing to worry about, as long as the branches remain hard and plump, for it is quite the natural thing for all plants of a deciduous character to shed their leaves in the fall and remain leafless while dormant. The danger comes from allowing the soil to

become dust-dry and to *remain* so. Plants in storage should be kept in the dark so far as possible. Light encourages growth. So does heat. Therefore in order to keep a plant in dormant condition when in the cellar keep it cool, give it as little water as will prevent the soil from drying out completely, and shut the light away from it. What we aim at is a rest for the plant that will correspond to the resting-spell of the plants out-of-doors—the hardy kinds that remain dormant during winter. The successful culture and management of all plants consists in following the processes of nature as closely as possible.

Do not neglect to make use of storm-sashes at the windows where plants are kept. With two thicknesses of glass between them and the outside cold it will not be necessary to move them away from the window on extra-cold nights. They can be safely left with their leaves against the inner glass, as the

air-space between it and the outer thickness will prevent frost from forming there.

When fall comes and the heavy work of summer is over, there will still be a good deal of work to do in the garden. Cut away the stalks of the perennials. Pull up the dead annuals. Clear away all refuse and rubbish. Neatness should prevail in the garden at all times.

I should advise raking the lawn frequently after the leaves begin to fall, with a view to making use of them as a covering for perennials. Leaves are nature's ideal covering, and we cannot do better than imitate her methods.

Keep close watch of everything about the home-grounds, and when a repair of any kind is needed make it at once. It is much easier to *keep* things in good shape by giving little attentions as soon as required than it is to let breakdowns accumulate on your hands

until the demand for repairs becomes so insistent that you are obliged to put in several days' work in "fixing things up." The home that always looks well is the home in which attention is given to all phases of work *at the proper time.*

CHAPTER XXVIII

SWEET HOME

I SET out to write this book on home-making with a definite purpose in mind. That purpose was, primarily, to make it helpful to others, who may decide upon a country home, but can bring no previous experience to the making of it. And then—so great has been the satisfaction which my experience of country life has given me in a thousand-and-one ways that cannot be set down in a chronicle of this kind,—I hoped something I might say would induce others to do as I have done. Since I came to live in the country I have found it impossible to look upon my fellow-workmen whose homes are in the city with anything but pity. I feel very sure that if they could

be brought fully to understand the advantages of country life, as compared with the disadvantages of the city, they would set about planning for a country home. And this more especially for their children's sake. From the bottom of my heart I pity the child who must grow up under the dangerous influences of life in a great city.

In the making of my own home, of which this book is a truthful record, in outline, I planned, first of all, for comfort. Then came up for consideration the question of convenience. My aim has been, all along, to make such changes and improvements as would reduce the labor of the household to a minimum, and make it so easy to do what has to be done that the work would be shorn of the unpleasant features which generally characterize it. In working out this idea I think I have been so successful in making home convenient that I may be pardoned for indulging in a little self-

congratulation. Mary tells me that she doesn't see what more can be done to improve things, but *I* can. Just what the nature of the improvements will be I cannot say at the present writing, but that there will come opportunities for them I am very sure. And when the opportunities present themselves they will be promptly taken advantage of.

We have found life in the country so full of healthful influences that we seem to have been made over. Fresh air and country living have driven out the blighting effects of city life, and made healthy, happy creatures of us. When I look at my boys—big, strapping, robust, rosy-cheeked lads, with muscles already such as their father never had,—and think what they most likely would have been had they been brought up in the city, I feel that I was simply doing my duty by them in giving them a chance to grow up under the influence of a simpler and more

natural life than the boy who stays in the city can ever have.

We have never had any reason to regret the change we made on social grounds. We have the best of neighbors. We have good reading in so generous a quantity that we find ourselves unable to do it full justice. We have a neighborhood magazine club of which any one can become a member by the payment of a dollar. From the fund thus secured we subscribe to a dozen or more of the best periodicals. These include magazines in which fiction of the best class predominates, women's magazines, scientific journals, agricultural papers, and periodicals for young folks. There is something suited to all classes of readers, and all tastes. These periodicals are passed on from one family to another until all the members of the club have had a chance at them. So you see we keep up with the times pretty well in a literary point of view.

One of our latest "improvements" about the home is a Victrola. I am well aware that some captious critics with a musical tendency have seen fit to speak sneeringly of "canned music," but that doesn't make our appreciation of the Victrola's ability to entertain and educate any the less. When we gather about the fire on the hearth, in the long winter evenings, and listen to some of the world's best music by the world's best singers, we cannot help feeling ourselves in touch with the great musical world outside our little neighborhood. And when, as they often do, the boys and girls "drop in" to spend the evening with Tom and Robert, and there is an impromptu dance to the strains of music from our "home orchestra," Mary and I look on and enjoy the pleasure of the young folks quite as much as they do. I often wonder, as I watch the lads and lasses at their innocent merriment, if those who spend more of their money in

one night, at the opera, than I earn in a week, and those who pass the evening hours in the feverish excitement of the cabaret, and at the vaudeville performance enjoy themselves as much as I do. No doubt they would be bored to death by what passes for pleasure with me, but since I am simple-minded enough to enjoy it, why—let me!

Said Mary to me one evening:

"To-day I read an article about giving every place a name. It said that every place had, or ought to have, an individuality of its own, and that some name should be given it to distinguish it from other homes. I think we ought to have a name for *our* home, don't you?"

"That's a good idea," I said. "We'll have a name for our home, and you shall say what the name shall be."

My wife was thoughtful for a moment. Then she said, "I can't think of anything

that would make a better or more appropriate name for it than just Sweet Home."

"Sweet Home it shall be," I said. "Christen it with music, Robert."

The lad found the record that he knew I had in mind, and as we listened to the strains of that immortal melody, we repeated softly and reverently the new name that love had given to the place so dear to us:

HOME, SWEET HOME.